

5/25/70 1770.06.1
M E R O P E:

**A
T R A G E D Y.**

Acted at the

T H E A T R E - R O Y A L

I n D R U R Y - L A N E,

By His MAJESTY'S Servants.

K. Anon. 1770

By AARON HILL, Esq; *Volume*



L O N D O N:

Printed for A. MILLAR, opposite Katharine-Street,
in the Strand. MDCCXLIX.

Price 1s. 6d.

London

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON

THE LONDON



DEDICATION.

Over'd, in Fortune's *Shade*, I rest reclin'd;
My Griefs, All, silent: and my Joys resign'd:
With patient Eye, Life's *evening Gleam*, survey:
Nor shake th' out-hast'ning Sands; nor bid 'em *stay*,
Yet, while from *Life*, my setting Prospects fly,
Fain wou'd my *Mind's* weak Offspring *shun to die*.
Fain wou'd *their* Hope some *Light through Time*, explore;
The *Name's* kind Passport—when the *Man's* no more.

Such, let 'em find!----yet, waste no Search, in *vain*!
All undisturb'd, let *busy Dullness* reign!
Spare *Power's* deaf Ear: from *Flatt'ry's* Lure start wide;
Nor swell the tow'ry Domes, of *air-built Pride*.
But, near some silent Seat, where *Wisdom* dwells,
Hail *Taste* and *Candor*, in their pensive Cells.
There sits, high-shown, o'er *Fogs* that *low're between*,
Wit's guardian LORD, in his sequester'd Scene.
There, the gain'd Soul's MONOPOLIZER, find:----
Th' immense Embracer, of *contain'd Mankind*!
Him, whome no Verse o'erpaints, no Thoughts o'er-rate;
By the *Heart's* RANK, and *Nature's* Charter, GREAT!
Him, whome no *Titles*, *lost*, cou'd leave *less rais'd*:
Nor Thrones imperial cou'd have held, *more prais'd*,
Whom Each known Right, by each best Claim acquir'd,
With Every Charm, for every Heart, inspir'd.
THERE, hail th' immortal Beam-----and end the Care,
Feel Every Force, from every VIRTUE, *there*.
Find Every GRACE, that smiles 'twixt Pole and Pole:
And All the MUSES, met---in ST. JOHN'S SOUL.

April, 1749.

A. HILL.

ADVERTISEMENT to the READER.

IF there can be a *Pride*, that ranks with *Virtues*, it is That, we feel from Friendships with the *Worthy*.—Mr. MALLET, therefore, must forgive me, that I boast the Honour, He has done my *Meropé*.—I have so long been a Retreater from the World, that one of the *best Spirits* in it told me, lately, I had made myself an ALIEN, there. I must confess, I owe so many Obligations to its Ornaments, of most distinguished Genius, that I must have look'd upon it as a great *Unhappiness*, to have made Choice of *Solitude*, cou'd I have judg'd Society, in general, by a Respect *so due* to *These Adorners* of it.

Had I been *born* the ALIEN my Friend call'd me, the Regard wherewith our generous Nation has receiv'd this Tragedy, might look but as a natural Effect of its *Humanity* to FOREIGNERS.

Among These, the *French*, above all People in the World, experience our, too kind, Partiality—in Favour even of their *Defects*, and *Levities*. And, yet, their boasted *Politesse* wants Gratitude to pay us back a *like Civility*, where due to our *best Qualities*.

For, *France*, unsatisfied with her Ambition toward Monopoly in *Empire*, would extend it to Supremacy in *Wit* and *Learning*. And, particularly, some of Mr. *Voltaire's* Pieces are so swell'd with this presumptuous Puffiness, that I am forc'd into *Abatements*, of the Disposition I once felt, to look upon him as a generous Thinker. So much over-active *Sensibility*, to his own Country's Claims: With so unfeeling a *Stupidity*, in judging the Pretensions of his Neighbours, might *absolve* all Indignation, short of gross Indecency; toward one who has not scrupled (in the Preface to *His MEROPÉ*) to represent the *English* as *incapable of Tragedy*; nay, even of *Painting*, or of *Musick*. We are Men, he says, who push to their Extremes, upon our Theatres, *Barbarity*, *Absurdity*, and *absolute Indecency*.—Men, born in a too barren Climate, to produce a *Taste*, for the *Fine Arts*: and who must rank beneath All other People, in the Points of *Genius*, and of *Literature*!

To such *provoking Stimulations*, I have ow'd Inducement, to *retouch*, for Mr. *Voltaire's* Use, the Characters in his high-boasted *Meropé*: and I have done it on a Plan as near his own, as I could wring it, with safe Conscience: that is to say, without Dis taste to *English Audiences*.

Advertisement to the Reader

diences. For he must pardon me, if I am sensible, that our *unpolish'd London Stage*, (as he assumes the Liberty of calling it) has entertained a nobler Taste of dignify'd *Simplicity*, than to deprive dramatic Poetry of All that animates its Passions; in Pursuit of a *cold, starv'd, tame, Abstinence*; which, from an Affectation to shun *Figure*, sinks to *Flatness*: an elaborate *Escape* from *Energy*, into a groveling, wearisome, bald, barren, un-alarming, *Chillness* of Expression, that *emasculates* the Mind, instead of *moving* it.

I would not have it charg'd upon his being a *Frenchman*, that I use a kind of *hostile* Style, in speaking of this Gentleman. He has been pleas'd to do me, in some Prefaces of his, a great deal of particular Honour,—and it has been more than once, and upon different Occasions, I have given *him* Proofs, of a *Partiality*, that will exempt me from so poor a Censure.—Our *Insulaires* (as he contemptuously calls us) are not us'd to think so narrowly, as to extend the temporary Animosity of Nations *oppositely interested*, to the Spirits of their *Writers* upon *literary* Subjects.—Arts and Sciences are of *no Country*. They conjoin the Natives of all Corners of the Earth, as Fellow-Citizens of *one Republic*.—But, what *imports* this Truth, toward privileging such an Arrogance, as dis-incorporates *itself*, by unbenevolent and *separatory* Partialities.

I have Room to say no more, in a short Preface; but will undertake, in a more proper place, to make it evident, to Mr. *Voltaire's* Satisfaction, and to That of the *French Author* of a Piece which they have lately publish'd, in a like vain Preference of *their Players* too, as well as *Poets*, (call'd *LE COMEDIEN*) that we have had much *finer Writers*, now have; and shall, always, have 'em; and that we have *better Actors*, too, and *Actresses*, than Those of *Paris*. I shall shortly hope to leave This Matter indisputable even to a *French Judge*: in a *Comparison between the ENGLISH and FRENCH Theatres*.—It wou'd have pleas'd me more, if *Abler Hands* than mine had seem'd dispos'd to do their Country *fuller Justice*. There are many, in it, so much better qualify'd, *for* doing it, that I impute its not being done, already, to no other Motive, than *Contempt*, of those vain Writers Confidence.

The Universally acknowledged, and *felt*, Skill, of a *Eumenes*, and a *Meropé*, such as no Stage ever saw excell'd, (not to name *Others*, who deserv'd Applause, and met with it, to a Degree excitingly uncommon) leaves it quite unnecessary to add any Thing upon That Subject, *here*: there seeming to have been a generous Struggle, whether the Town's ready Disposition to encourage Excellence in Acting, or the *Actor's* to reward That Disposition, by Increase of Power in pleasing, should be most agreeably remarkable.

P R O L O G U E.

Spoken by Mr. GARRICK.

TOUCH'D be your generous Hearts, to spare this Play?
Where Mirth wou'd laugh Humanity away.
Two thousand Years our Tale has shook the Stage,
And mov'd the Hearts of Greece, from Age to Age:
Ev'n ALEXANDER wept our Queen's Despair,
And, Conqu'ror of a World, sat conquer'd, there.
Bid your brave Hearts explode th' unfinew'd Scene,
Where Toys insult a People, born, to mean.
From your warm'd Stage, demand th' impassion'd Glow,
That draws Delight from Death; and Use, from Woe:
Lifts, by Depression: tries the tortur'd Mind,
In Grief's fierce Fires; and brings her out, refin'd.
Unbow'd by Wrongs, bids Virtue bear Distress:
And rise still steadier, as new Loads oppress.
Ladies! stand firm, to Passion's tenderest Claim:
Sighs are Love's breezy Powers, and fan his Flame.
Laughing Gallants may promise merry Lives:
But, laughing Husbands make you weeping Wives.
They, whose own Hearts can feel, will treat yours best:
And He give Pain, who thinks it but a Jest.
Nobly weep out,—nor let Shame's erring Blush
Hold back the struggling Tear; that longs to gush.
And you, gay Sparklers, of an Hour too short!*
Ye Foes to Thinking! and ye Friends to Sport!
Make it no Joke, when pensively distress'd,
Sighs, in yon Circle, swell the beauteous Breast.
Force, to the finest Face, such Sorrow lends:
Pity, and Innocence, are bosom Friends.
No Smile, but Love's, shou'd meet the tear-touch'd Eye,
Where, lodg'd on Beauty, Virtue's Dew-drops lie.
But, when deep Anguish shakes a feeling Mind,
How must it ake,—for Laughters heard behind!
Why shou'd Men dream, that only Mirth can please?
No jocular Wag e're laugh'd off Life's Disease.
Sick'ning to Sadness, soon or late comes Care;
And He, who flies from Thought, will meet Despair.
'Tis the pale Coward's Curse, to start in vain;
And think, postponing is escaping Pain.
Courage, that weighs Misfortune, finds it light;
And, half-admitting, you disarm it quite.
Oh, save strong Sentiments; approve their Flame;
And aid, with generous Hand, the Muse's Claim.

* To the Beaus.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. PRITCHARD.

I M glad with all my Heart, I've scap'd my Wedding—
 Glad! cry the Maids?—Heaven keep such Joy from spreading!
 Marriage, (poor Things!) don't move their Heart so coldly.
 'Tis a dark Leap, they own—but, Love jumps boldly.—
 Fair fall th' Advers'ers! I'm no Husband-bater.—
 Only, be warn'd by Me, and wed no TRAITOR.
 Pain-hunting Murm'rer! born, to growl, and grumble!
 No King can please him,—and no Wife can humble!
 Sick to the Soul, be HEAVEN his kind Physician!
 Earth's ablest Drugs are lost, upon Ambition.
 All Warwick-lane falls short:—and, to my Knowledge,
 No Cure is hop'd for, in our Female College.
 So, e'en despair, Sirs!—for, (be plainly told it)
 When we give out, You've poor Pretence, to hold it.

Vainly, the Stage makes War on this wild Passion!
 'Twill reign,—when Hoops, and Cards are out of Fashion.
 Stubborn, as Woman's Will, It scorns Restriction,
 And grows but ten times worse, for Contradiction.

Shun plotting Heads, dear Ladies!—All miscarries,
When One, who hums and haws at Midnight, MARRIES.
 Better, plain, downright DUNCE—No Dream, pursuing:
 One, that means bluntly—and knows, what he's doing!
 Not Him, whose fawning Mind, outsoaring Pleasure,
 Holds him still busiest,—when his Wife's at Leisure.

Better, a Sportsman, sound of Wind, and hearty.—
 Better, Sir Sot,—than Spouse dry drunk, with Party!
 A hunting Husband hallows—and you HEAR him:—
 A drunken Deary stag-gets—and you STEER him—
 Each,—conscious of his Wife, takes Care, to make her,
 One Way or other—an indulg'd Partaker.

But, your sage, saturnine, ambitious Lover,
 Keeps no one Secret, Woman wou'd discover.
 No.—He's a deep, dark, pens'ive, Comfort-hater:
 As very a Poliphontes—as my Traitor!
 Stranger at home, he strolls abroad, for Blessing:
 And holds where'er he HAS not worth poss'ing.
 Freedom, and Mirth, and Health, and Joy,—despises!
 And scorns All REST—he, so pro-found-ly WISE is!

At length, thank Heaven! he DIES: kind Vapours strike him:
 And leaves behind,—ten thousand Madmen, like him.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

POLIPHONTES, *General of* } Mr. HAVARD.
Mycené.

MEROPE', *Widow of the* } Mrs. PRITCHARD.
late King.

EUMENES, *her Son.* Mr. GARRICK.

EURICLES, *a Lord, of Me-* } Mr. LEE.
ropé's Party.

NARBAS, *Foster Father to* } Mr. BERRY.
Eumenes.

EROX, *Favourite of Poli-* } Mr. BRIDGES.
phontes.

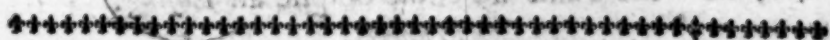
ISMENE', *Daughter of Narbas.* Mrs. GREEN.

Chief Priest, and other Priests. Mr. BEARD, &c.

Ladies, Officers, Guards, &c.



M E R O P E.



A C T I. S C E N E I.

An Apartment in the Palace.

M E R O P E', *mournful, on a Couch.*

I S M E N E', *leaning melancholy, below.*

Soft Musick.

Enter, to I S M E N E', a Singer.

I S M E N E'

SEE! where the lone majestic Mourner weeps;
Loft, even to *Musick's* Power!—try: strain
each Note,
In Melody's wide Compass.—Happily,
Some Change, through *sad*, to *lively*, may have Force,
To strike recov'ring Sense, and wake Regard.
—First, in low Sympathy of *Sorrow's Softness*,
Sooth her dejected Soul—then, start at once
To *Swells* of Joy—and storm Attention's Ear.

*Song: by the same Voice, interchangeably, to Flute
and Trumpet: which are heard as at some Dis-
tance without.*

Flute.

Stay, stay, *Despair!*—begone vain *Hoper!* go.
Sorrow can hear no Voice, but That of *Woe.*

Trumpet.

Trumpet.

Away with your *Tears* where Enjoyment shou'd flow.
 Bid Defiance to *Pain*.—let her go: let her go.
 Do the Gods love *Complainers*?—No. No. No.

Flute.

Ah!—tis in *vain* to strive—farewell *believing*.
Death is the sure short *Road*—to shun *deceiving*.

Trumpet.

Laugh at your *Woes*: and make 'em *pleasing*.

Flute.

No, no—the *Pains* we chuse despise all *Easing*.

Trumpet.

Hope for a *Cure* where Nature plac'd it.
 Life is so short, 'tis a Shame to waste it.
 Seek for *Delight*: and *deserve* to taste it.
Age will come on, and allow no *Leasure*.
Youth will be gone, and away goes *Pleasure*.

Flute.

Rest and the *Grave* will meet.—but ah!—*til then*,
Joy flies the vain Pursuit of *hopeless Men*.

Meropé rises, and comes forward.

I S M E N E.

Go—the *Queen* rises.—Angels, that have tun'd,
 Reward the vocal Magic of thy Song.

Exit Singer.

M E R O P E.

Let me, when, *next*, thy too officious Love,
 Faithful *Ijmené*, trys th' harmonious Charm,
 Let me, have Musick, *solemn*, all, and *slow*,
 Sid-suited to my Thoughts—Why shou'd I hear,
 Who have no Power to *taste*, such *sprightly* Notes,
 As they who are more Happy, find more Sweet?

I S M E N E.

Why, when the *Gods* grow gentle, are *You* sad?
 You felt their *Anger*, sharply.—Now they smile,
 Embrace their proffer'd Bounty—All the Lords
 Of glad *Mycené*, in full Senate met,
 Take Measures to proclaim you reigning Queen:

You,

A T R A G E D Y.

3

You, whom distress but brightens!—to whose Charms,
Made awful by your Grief, Woes add new Majesty!

M E R O P E.

What, no News yet, of *Narbas*? or my *Son*?

I S M E N E.

May it be soon!—No Prince, of Birth like His,
Where-e're conceal'd, can 'scape such Search, unknown.

M E R O P E.

Will ye, at length, ye Powers, reward my Tears?
Will ye, at last, restore *Eumenes*, to me?
—If he yet lives—this only remnant Heir
Of his wrong'd Mother's Miseries!—oh, *save* him.
From his dear Breast, strike wide the Murd'rer's
Dagger.

Is he not *Your's*? a Branch, from Great *Alcides*?
What, tho'—forget it, and be *busb'd*, O Faith!
What, tho' to Traitors prosp'rous Swords, you gave
His *Father's* fated Life—ah, yet! desert not
This Image of his Form, that fills my Soul.

I S M E N E.

Dear, tho' he doubtless was, and justly mourn'd,
Shou'd you *exclude* all sense of Bliss, beside?

M E R O P E.

I am a *Mother*:—with a Mother's Fears.

I S M E N E.

But, can a Mother's Fears efface the Stamp
Of *Hero's* Soul, that marks a Race like yours?
—Sweet, tho' his infant Smiles, they dwell, too fix'd,
Too deep, on your touch'd Memory!—Long Years
Are past, since first you lost him.

M E R O P E.

Lost him?—never.—

In twice seven dreadful years, no Moment's Light
Broke on my Eyes, but brought *His Image* with it.
Why tell'st thou me of *Time*?—Days, Months, and
Years,
Have grown; but with 'em grew, my Pain, to lose him.
—Weigh that last fatal Hint, thy Father sent me.

Hope, said th' Alarmer soon, to see *Eumenes*
All, you wou'd wish:—fear All, from *Polipbontes*.

I S M E N E.

Wisely, you fear him.—but 'twere wiser, still,
So fearing, to *prevent* him.—Hear the *States*:
Quit, at their Prayer, this *Regent's* Name—be crown'd:
And rise, indeed the *Queen* they meant to make you.

M E R O P E.

Is not the Crown my *Son's*?

I S M E N E.

A Son, so lov'd—

Shou'd he return, wou'd thank—

M E R O P E.

Perish the Heart,

That, meanly proud, and poorly fill'd for *Self*,
Swells, from Another's *Losses*!

I S M E N E.

Public Interest—

M E R O P E.

Curse on *all* Int'rest, that includes not *Honesty*!
—But, here, even Int'rest brings no Plea to tempt me.
What can a *childless* Mother hope, from Empire?
What has Distress to do, with Pomp's vain Splendor?
—I see the very Light of Heaven, with *Pain*.
Ne're shall brief Comfort cheer these blasted Eyes,
That saw my bleeding Lord, my murder'd Children;
Saw my Friends fall: Saw *Men* and *Gods* forsake me.
—O, Guilt! O, Perfidy!—oh! Death's dire Day!
Present, forever, to my frightened Soul.

I S M E N E.

Oft have I wept,—to hear that Day's sad Tale.

M E R O P E.

I hear it *now*!—Even yet their Cries rise round me!
Save, save, the *King*—save the poor gasping *Princes*:
Save the distracted *Queen*!—I scream—I fly—
On every Side I turn meet battling Crowds:
Swords, glitt'ring Spears, loud Shouts, and mingled
Groanings.

Meet,

Meet, *last*—a Sight—beyond all Sense of Horror !
 Meet—an expiring Husband's out stretch'd Eye,
 Strain'd, with a death-mix'd Tendernefs on mine—
 And struggling from his Blood, to reach, and clasp me.
 —There, two departing infant Sufferers *fell*,
 The Eldest, of our Loves !—duteous, in *Death* !
 Cross the King's Breast, they threw their little Bodies,
 And lent *their* Hand's weak Aid—to save their Father.
 —Only *Eumenes*—'scap'd th' Assassin's Fury.
 Some interposing *God* vouchsaf'd to *veil* him :
 And He, who screen'd him, then, may, *once*, restore him,
 —*Narbas*, thy wife, thy faithful Father, bore him
 Far from my Sight—to some dark safe Retreat :
 Some *Desart*,—barren of Distress, and Man !

SCENE II.

MEROPE. ISMENE. EURICLES.

ISMENE.

Madam !—Lord *Euricles*—

MEROPE.

Wellcome—what Hope ?

EURICLES.

Wou'd, I cou'd answer—what you wish to hear !

MEROPE.

Not what I wish—but what Heaven wills, reply.

EURICLES.

Vain was our Search—From *Peneus*' Bank, it spread,
 O'er vast *Olympus* : far and wide, through *Greece*,
 Enquiry, lab'ring, lost its fruitless Prayer.
 Description cou'd not wake the least Idea.
 None knew, none ever heard of, *Narbas*' Name !

MEROPE.

Alas ! he breaths no more—my Son is *dead*.

ISMENE.

So, Fear makes real every fancied Woe,
 —You've heard, that, on Report of this new Peace,
 My Father guides him, secret, to your Wish.

EURI-

E U R I C L E S.

Thence grew his Fear! Good *Narbas*, wisely loyal,
Veils his Return, and cautiously conveys him.
Narbas knows All his Dangers—I, mean while,
Watch, with a guardful Eye these Murd'ers Motions:
And, with determin'd Hand, prepare to save him.

M E R O P E.

On Faith so try'd as Thine, even Woe leans, easy.

E U R I C L E S.

Doubt but my *Power's* Defect: My *Will* finds none.
—But I have News more threat'ning.

M E R O P E.

Can That be?

E U R I C L E S.

Th' assembled Senate vote, in warm Debate,
A Partner in your Crown.—

M E R O P E.

Presumptuous Care!

You shou'd have call'd it *Insult*.

E U R I C L E S.

Words were vain.

Truth, unsustain'd by Power, but fights, to fall.
The partial *People* roar for *Poliphontes*:
And Right, and Law, and Pity, sink before him.

M E R O P E.

Can Fortune, then, reduce the Great to *Pity*!
Can Kings, in their own Realms, contract to *Slaves*?
He, who counts *Jove*, among his crown'd Progenitors,
Come He, to Subjects, to explore a *Master*!
—Shame on thy *Lies*, O Loyalty!

E U R I C L E S.

Your Friends—

M E R O P E.

I have *no* Friends—Yes—Thee; good *Euricles*!
Forgive me, that I wrong'd thee—'twas my *Sorrow*.
The *Wretched*, in their Pain, forget the *Kind*.
—Blocks! Stones!—Rebellion hardens Men, to Brutes!
Senseless, alike, to Gratitude, and Glory,
Even *Name*, as well as *Natures*, change their Meaning.

E U R I

A TRAGEDY.

7

EURICLES.

Dear, to their Hearts, they hold their Sov'reign's Name;
And weep his honour'd Mem'ry.——For *Yourself*,
Their Love outgoes Description.——They but fear.
Your Sexe's widow'd Weakness *insecure*;
And *Poliphontes' Sword*, they think, will guard it.

MEROPE.

Ever insulted, now by Friends, now Forms.
Princes are *Slaves*, that Subjects may have *Liberty*.
Driven, or attracted, ever!——why was a King
Call'd *Ruler*? infamous Abuse of Phrase!
Faction and Clamour are, *more*, Kings than He.

EURICLES.

Something must be resolv'd, to check their Speed.

MEROPE.

Yes——let me *face* these Lords, of Kings, and Law:
Comets of Empire! these portent'cus Stars,
That sparkle by the Fire they *steal* from Majesty!
I will go dart Truth's Light'ning in their Eyes,
And thunder in their Ears the Rights of Thrones.
I will revive lost Sense of Trust, and Duty:
I will assert their Sov'reign's near Return.

(going.)

EURICLES.

Oh, Heav'n! be wary——That Way, Ruin lies.
Their Tyrant Leader starts, already fir'd,
By that Alarm: and dreams, of what he dreads.

MEROPE.

What *can* he, more——so much already done?

EURICLES.

Jealous of Danger, Men make Haste in Guilt:
Work, to be safe, and hold no Means too wicked.
Mycené, but by Faction, freed from Faction,
Weigh'd like a Conquest, he computes His *own*.
No Tye so sacred binds endanger'd Valour,
Where hot Ambition spurs it——Every Rampart
Gives Way, before him. *Law*, corrupted, guards him.
Wealth dresses, *Poverty* attends, *Pride* leads:
And *Priesthood* presses Gods who *hate*——to *serve* him.

MERO.

I see th' Abyfs, before me——Let it be.
If I plunge in, and crush this *Poliphontes*,
'Twill be, to fall for Vengeance.

E U R I C L E S.

Soft!——he comes.

Exeunt Euricles and Ismené.

M E R O P E.

Wear for a Moment, Heart! the Veil thou hat'st.

S C E N E III.

M E R O P E. P O L I P H O N T E S.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Ever in *Tears*, my Queen!——now, give a Truce
To Sighs; and cast aside your needless Sorrow.
Shake, from those injur'd Eyes, a Grief that dims'em;
And to the Voice of *Love*, vouchsafe your Ear.
——*Mycene's Chiefs* have task'd my willing Sword
To guard, and (wou'd you smile) *partake*, your Throne.

M E R O P E.

Unblushing Faction, What *bold* Brows are Thine!

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Faction, uprooted now, survives no more.
One sole *Division* rests:——'twixt *You*, and *Me*.
Last, let *us*, too, unite——Peace, Reason, Safety,
Confed'rate Strength, joint Int'rest, All, concur;
To recommend, and firm, this courted Knot
——You frown——

M E R O P E.

I do, indeed: and gaze, with Horror!

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Gaze on.—I am no Stranger to *myself*;
Nor to a Woman's *Passions*.—I grew grey
Beneath a Weight, of Winters spent in Arms.
——I know, Time's Furrows are no Paths to Love.
I know too, *You* are younger:——still, retain
Charms,

A TRAGEDY.

37

Charms, past their sickly Bloom, and ripe as Summer.
I know it, All.—But, Wisdom knows it *now* *not*
Interest of State o'er-leaps nice Tastes in Love.

—Weigh not my Offer in Diddain's light Balance.
You are the Daughter, Mother, Wife, of King:
But the State wants a *Master*.—What avails
Vain Title, till some Sword, like mine, supports it.

MEROPE.

Heaven, that o'ercharg'd my Heart with Loads of
For this new Insult, left it unprepared.
Bold *Subject*, of a King who call'd me *Wife*!
Dar'st thou defame the Mem'ry of thy *Lord*,
With such audacious Hope?—Aspire, to me!
Me, to supplant my *Child*! my Heart's whole Care:
Stain his dishonour'd Throne, with Guilt and Thee!
Me, canst thou dream so base, to wed Thy Lowness:
And crown with Empire's Wreath a Soldier's Brow?

POLIPHONTES.

Soldier? immortal Gods!—*Who* more deserves
To govern, States, than He who, best, can *save*?
—With how perverse an Aptitude, Diddain
Forgets, its own Foundation!—*Teach* it, Madam!
That All that swells your *Pride*, supports my *Honour*.
He who was, first, call'd *King*, e're That, was *Soldier*.
Great, because brave; and scepter'd, by his *Sword*.
—Birth is a Shadow. *Courage*, self-sustain'd,
Out-lord's Succession's Phlegm—and needs no Ancestry.
I am *above* *Descent*; and prize no *Blood*.
Scarce is my own left mine; 'tis lost, for *Glory*:
Spilt, in my Country's Cause: in *Yours*, fair Scornet!
—Let what still warms my Heart flow, *last*, for *You*.
Nay, why *averted*?—Spite of your Contempt,
My *Worth* weighs *heaviest*, per *but* *Rank* in Balance.
Take Safety—'tis my *Gift*. Fill half my Throne;
My *Party* calls *All* mine: Love *shares* it yours.

MEROPE.

Party? Thou fell Provoker, of Reproach!
Party should tremble, where a *Monarch* rules?

B

POLI.

POLIPHONTES. *It flag, amasid*
There will be Parties; and there *must* be Kings;
And he, who best can *curb*, was form'd to reign.

MEROPE. *W—*
Blush, if thou can'st, thou Foe to Truth, and Fame,
To thy King's Ashes, to his Widow's Tears;
To his lost Son's hard, hopeless, friendless, Fate:
And his high kindred Gods, who gave him Empire.

POLIPHONTES. *and*
'Tis doubtful, whether, yet, this Son *survives*.
But, come he, if he *can*, from Death's dumb Shade,
And, back'd by kindred Gods, reclaim his Throne.
—I seek not to *deceive* you.—Stern *Mycenè*
Brooks no such feeble Master. Warlike States
Lean, but on time-try'd Columns, Kings, whose Claim
Springs from their *Souls*—and who *defend*, and reign.
—I, who *reveng'd* your Lord, by Right succeed him.

MEROPE. *TO*
Succeed him, Traitor?—Has he not a Son?

POLIPHONTES. *TO*
Boy-brain'd *Eumenes* is too young, for Power—
Be Pride his Birth-right—I'm content with Empire.
—Why should he, acting nothing, ask for All?

MEROPE. *and*
Gods were his Great Forefathers,—*thence*, his Claim.

POLIPHONTES. *TO*
Far other Value, bears *Mycenè's Crown*.
Right, to rule *Men*, is now no longer held
By dull Descent, like *Land's* low Heritage:
'Tis the pluck'd Fruit of Toil—'tis the paid Price
Of Blood, lost nobly: And 'tis, *thence*, my Due.

MEROPE. *and*
What hast thou done, thou Wretch! to dare such Hope?

POLIPHONTES. *TO*
Bethink you, of that Day, when these proud Walls
Blush'd with the Blood you boast, from Traitor's Swords.
Review your helpless *Husband*—see your *Sons*,
Expiring, round you.—Wipe those gushing Eyes—
And

A TRAGEDY.

19

And view me, what I *was*: Not, then, too *low*
To share your ruffled *Passions*.—Yes: 'Twas I,
From your freed Palace chas'd th' o'orwhelming Foe:
Sav'd your *Herculean* Sceptre, and its Queen.
—I, I, *repell'd*,—the Woes you could but *weep*.
See *there*, my Right, my Rank, my Claim to *Love*.

MEROPE.

Hear, hear him, Heaven! and give me back my Son.

POLIPHONTES.

Yes: Let him come, this *Son*!—He shall be taught
Lessons of Glory: Taught *my* Arts to reign.
—*Joy* to the Blood of *Hercules*!—I, too,
Revere: Let others dread it. *My* Ambition
Climbs, *beyond* Progeny—not to descend
From Heaven, *my* Wish. Could I aspire, to be,
Myself, a God, 'twere well.—To spring from Gods,
Is less, than mine—who, *like* a God, *command*.

MEROPE.

Think—e're thou claim'st a Greatness, *not* thy own—
If thou would'st emulate a God, be *just*:
Man can be *brave*, too boldly.—*Hercules*
Sav'd many a King.—But, did he *steal* their *Diadems*?
—Woud'st thou resemble *Hercules*?—Protect
Unfriended Innocence. Assert thy Prince.
Restore th' unhappy Wand'rer to my Arms;
Cease to afflict; and *give* him, to my Fondness.
—*So*, cou'd thy Influence move, *so* try'd, *so* courted,
Who knows—for, Gratitude has Power, *like* Love—
Who knows—how far I *might* forget my Glory—
And—if Peace dwells so low—*Expect* it *not*—
I will not bid you hope—that I *can* stoop.
So greatly far.—*Bend*, I am sure, I *cannot*.

[Exit. Meropé.]

B 2

SCENE.

SCENE IV.

POLIPHONTES, EROX.

EROX.

Ent'ring, I heard her too presumptuous Scorn,
 And wonder'd, at your Patience! Waits a King,
 For a weak Woman's *Wish*, to fix his Throne?
 Greatly and bravely have you clear'd your Way
 To the Hill's Foot: Yet, when it courts your climbing,
 Fall back, to *figh*; and seek *her* Hand, to lead you!

POLIPHONTES.

Near, as thou think'st I stand, my warier Eye
 Marks, 'twixt the Throne and me, a *Precipice*,
 Where Faith or I fall headlong.—Does not *Meropé*
 Know, her *Eumenes* near?—Shou'd he return,
 Th' inconstant People wou'd with Shouts receive him,
 And smoothe his way to Empire, o'er my Bosom.
 —This shou'd I *suffer*—all in vain my Sword
 Succeeded, when *his Father* fell, my *Victim*.
 In vain *bled* both his *Brothers*.—Vainly, too,
 Thy Veil, O silent Darkness! has conceal'd me,
 Till I, behind *thee*, have been thought th' *Avenger*
 Ev'n of the *Blood I spilt*.—At length, impends
 Th' important Hour! and Fate is *mine*, or *Meropé's*.
 —Dear to *Mycené*, shou'd this Son *arrive*,
 Where are my fifteen Years long *Toils in Blood*?
Eumenes must not come.—Doom'd, from his Cradle,
 To blast my thwarted Schemes, *Atonement* claims him.
 —Thou know'st, from Proofs, most timely intercepted,
 This new Boy King *returns*, and hopes *Mycené*.
 What shall we do? Night veils not long (they say)
 The *Murd'rer's* time-told Secret. Some blind Chance
 May whisper, Truths he must not live to *bear*.
 —If, as our Priests assure us, Heaven *loves Vengeance*,
 Sure! after fifteen Years, of patient *Stray*,
 The leaden-footed Creeper, now, draws *near*!

EROX.

A TRAGEDY.

21

ER O X.

Trust your high Fortune, and disdain a Doubt,
Forefight and *Fierceness* are the brave Man's Gods,
And his own Hand supports him.

POLIPHONTES.

My late Order?

ER O X.

'Twas, with a silent Firmness, well obey'd.
—From *Elis* to *Mycené*, every Road
Is watch'd, by sleepless Warders.—If they come,
Narbas and *He*, their Gods must march before 'em:
Or not *Alcides'* Blood cou'd scape the shedding.
Your Soldier's Zeal is warm.

POLIPHONTES.

But is it blind?

ER O X.

It is.—None knows his *Name*, whose Life he waits.
All they have yet been told is, a sad Tale,
Of an *old wily Traitor*, leading with him,
On murd'rous Purpose, an *Assassin Youth*,
Urg'd by exacted Oaths, to seek your Death.

POLIPHONTES.

But, what this Rumour, of *Misanthus*, kill'd,
Before *Alcides' Temple*?—Is that true?

ER O X.

Too sure, he fell.—I chose *his* trusty Arm,
Join'd with his martial *Brother's*, as most fit,
To guard that likeliest Station; where, should *Narbas*
Dare, with his Exile, touch *Mycené's Border*,
First, they wou'd rest, to beg That *Godhead's* Care,
From whom their Race presumes its proud Descent.

POLIPHONTES.

'Twas Forecast, worthy of a Zeal, like Thine.
Nor cou'd thy Care have chosen an abler Hand,
Or one more try'd in Blood, than That *Misanthus*.
—'Twas *He*, thou know'st, that, faithful to my Cause,
On that black Night, attending, near *Cresphontes*,
Taught the King's Sword, amid the Dusk of Slaughter,

B 3

To

To pierce its *Master's* Breast.—An Act, so daring,
Deserv'd the Sword, tho' three rich *Gems* adorn'd it,
He *had* it: And he *wore* it, for his Pains.

ER O X.

Yet, at *Alcides' Temple*, drew it rashly,
And *lost* it, with his *Life*.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

How *scap'd* his Brother?

ER O X.

Scar'd, out of Mem'ry's Use, All he cou'd tell me
Was, that the God inspir'd some *dreadful Form*!
Some more than mortal *Monster*;—And *He fled*,

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Vile Safety!—lest his Brother unreveng'd:
And shun'd a Soldier's Death.—We must be watchful.
Some in-felt *Bodings* bid me call this Stranger
Eumenes: Or his *Friend*.

ER O X.

That Fear was mine:

Till, on Reflexion that he came, *alone*,
It look'd unlikely.—Chance it, as it may,
Whene're he this way comes, he comes, to *die*.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

True.—Yet, I cou'd have wish'd to *spare this Crime*,
But, one first chosen, the Rest grow necessary:
So falls the Son.—The *Mother* must not follow.
Her, I have *Need* of. Marriage mends my Reign.
Her rightful Title consecrates Ambition:
And Usurpation whitens into *Law*.
—The People love her: I, possessing *her*,
Hold her Friends too, in *Dowry*.—*Erox*!—thou,
Whose Fate grows close to mine, assist my Scheme.
Skill'd how to spread Craft's Nets, allure the People.
Train 'em, by ev'ry Art: poize ev'ry Temper,
Avarice will *sell* his *Soul*: Buy That, and *mould* it.
Weakness will be *deluded*; there, grow *eloquent*.
Is there a tott'ring Faith? Grapple it fast
By *Flatt'ry*: And profusely deal my *Favours*.

Threaten

A TRAGEDY.

23

Threaten the Guilty: *Entertain* the Gay.
Frighten the Rich: Find *Wishes*, for the Wanton: A
 And *Reverence*, for the Godly,—Let none 'scape thee.
 Dive into *Hearts*: Sound every Nature's *Bias*—
 And bribe Men by their *Passions*.—But, These Arts,
 Already Thine, why waste I Time to *teach* thee!
 Vainly, the *Sword* successful scales a Throne;
 Since, Fortune *changing*, Strength's lost Hope is flown.
 But *Art*, call'd in, attracts reluctant *Will*:
 And, what were lost by Power, is gain'd by Skill,

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Palace.

MEROPE. EURICLES. ISMENE.

MEROPE.

IS the World dumb, on my *Eumene's* Fate?

ISMENE.

Calamity, too soon, had found a Tongue.

MEROPE.

Has Nothing, from the Borders, yet been heard?

EURICLES.

Nothing, that claims *your* notice.

MEROPE.

Who is *He*,

This Prisoner, I am told, but now, brought guarded?

EURICLES.

A rash young Stranger, caught with guilty Hand,
 Red, from the recent Marks of some late Murder.

M E R O P E,

A MURDER! an unknown! — WHOM, has he kill'd?
How? and where, was it? — I am fill'd with Horror.

I S M E N E.

Oh! Sense too lively, of maternal Love!
All Things alarm your Tenderness. You hear
Chance speak: and take her Voice, for That of Nature.

E U R I C L E S.

This low Adventure, of some common Murd'rer,
Some Robber of the Borders, carries with it
No Consequence, of Quality to move you.
This, but one Crime, of many a thousand, frequent
On all our Frontiers: the sad Fruit, of Wars,
Domestic and licentious; weak'ning Justice,
And, fearless in the Face of Heaven, opposing
Friend against Friend, and Brother murd'ring Brother.

M E R O P E.

What is his Name? whence came he? — Why unknown?

E U R I C L E S.

He seems, and is, if Truth may trust Appearance,
A Youth of rural Birth, — Some Nymph's *Adonis*
Whose Eye wou'd sooner kill th' unpity'd Maid,
Than his unpractis'd *Sword* attempt the Man.

M E R O P E.

Whom (tell me) has he kill'd? — answer. — I'll see him.

E U R I C L E S.

What strange Emotion, This. —

M E R O P E.

No Matter. — bring him.

If I discover Guilt, 'tis mine to punish:
If wrong'd, I owe him Mercy.

E U R I C L E S.

— Should he have Merit,

'Tis plac'd so low, by Fortune. —

M E R O P E.

Fortune's Faults,
Where Merit suffers, call on Kings, to mend 'em.

E U

A TRAGEDY.

25

EURICLES.

What can a Wretch like This *deserve*, from Power?

MEROPE.

O, *Euricles*! look *inward*: ask thy Heart.

Be, for a Moment, but, This Wretch, *Thyself*—

And, *then*, acquit the Power, that scorn'd to note thee.

—Besides, who knows? he may—be *still*, prompt Fear.

Perhaps, my troubled Mind starts Hints too lightly.

Hearts that have Everything to fear, slight Nothing.

—Let him be brought.—I will, myself, examine him.

EURICLES.

Your Will *must* be obey'd.

MEROPE.

Go, my *Ismene*!

Bid those who guard the Pris'ner bring him hither.

Exit Ismene.

EURICLES.

Be That *my* fitter Task—

[*offering to go.*]

MEROPE.

No, *Euricles*.

Stay: and partake more Terrors—Cou'd you think it?

Pres'd by new Sorrows, I forget my past,

And have not yet inform'd you—*Polipbontes*

Has dar'd demand my *Hand*: dar'd—talk of *Marriage*.

EURICLES.

Great, even beyond their *Seemings*, are your Dangers!

MEROPE.

Dangers?—No Danger, sure! can license *That*!

EURICLES.

Might Freedom be forgiven.—

MEROPE.

Be plain.

EURICLES.

Oh! *Queen*!

I know his Offer *Insult*: know, It stains

Your Name. Yet, blushing, add,—Your forc'd Con-

Grown infamously *necessary*,—stands, [sent,

The sole, safe Bar, 'twixt All your Race, and *Ruin*.

ME.

M E R O P E,

M E R O P E.

'Tis Horror, but to *think*, so vile a Dream!

E U R I C L E S.

So thinks the *Army*.—So, the *Senate* thinks.So, think th' exacting *Gods*:—and, so—

M E R O P E.

The *Gods*!—Why were *They* nam'd?—Cou'd they forgive such *Fall*?

From their own Offspring, to a Son of Clay!

A Birth of Tumult! a blown Bubble! rais'd

By Fortune's Breath; and puff'd *above* the World,

To shine, a Moment, and go out in Weeping.

E U R I C L E S.

The King, your Son—

M E R O P E.

Ah! Name not *Him*.—How, *Euricles*!How wou'd He thank, my Choice of *such* a Father?

E U R I C L E S.

Princes grow wise by Sorrows. He will see

That hated Choice the Root of all his Safety.

He will, by That, survive his menac'd Doom:

Owe his secur'd Succession, to That Act

Of dire Necessity: and thank your Pity.

M E R O P E.

What, what, have you been telling me?

E U R I C L E S.

Hard Truths:

Due, from firm Loyalty, to weak Distress.

M E R O P E.

Can *Euricles* then plead, for *Poliphontes*!

You, who have painted him so vile, so truly,

And never stoop'd, yourself, from Faith, to Fraud?

E U R I C L E S.

I know him guilty:—but, I know him *rash*:Know him *resistless*: know him *childless*, too;And know, you love *Eumenes*.

M E.

A TRAGEDY.

27

MEROPE.

Loving Him,
How can I chuse but *bate*, the Hand that wrongs him?
—Leave *Poliphontes* odious: nor, forever,
Dwell thus on Claims of *Policy*;—forgetful,
That Princes are *above* these Self-securings:
And born, to live for Truth—or die for Glory.
—Speak to me of my Son: Say what you know
Of him.—hide Nothing—for,—

[Sits and weeps regardless of Eumene's Entrance.]

EURICLES.

Behold!—the Stranger,
You long'd, a Moment since, to see, and question.

SCENE II.

MEROPE. EURICLES. ISMENE. *Guards,*
with EUMENES, in Chains.

EUMENES.—(To Ismene.)

Is That the *Queen*, so fam'd for Miseries?

ISMENE.

It is.

EUMENES.

How sweetly awful!—how *adorn'd*, by Sorrows!

ISMENE.

Why dost thou pause? the Queen admits thee nearer.

EUMENES.

No wonder, so much Sweetness, *so distress'd*,

Mov'd, even so greatly distant,—as to *me*:

And drew me, from my Desert!—Give me Leave

To stand, a while.—and gaze unmark'd—and *note* her.

—O, ye protecting *Gods*! whate're becomes

Of an abandon'd, nameless Thing, like *me*,

Bless this *Supreme* Unfortunate! this Face,

That, awfully sublime, amidst Distress,

Glow's warm, with weeping Mercy!—Bold Adversity.

That strikes at Crowns, demands, O Heaven! Thy

guarding.

IS-

Madam!—the *Prisoner* waits.

M E R O P E.—*Turning, to observe him.*

A *Murderer*, This!—

Why stands he distant thus?—Come forward, Stranger.
—A Mien like this, a Murd'rer's!—*Can* it be,
That Looks, so form'd for Truth, so mark'd for Inno-
Cover a cruel Heart?—Come *nearer*, Youth! [cence,
Thou art unhappy; bid That Fate *protect* thee:
And speak, as to an Ear that loves the Wretched.
Answer me now.—Whose was the Blood thou shed'st?

E U M E N E S.

Oh, Queen!—Yet—for a Moment—spare my Tongue.

M E R O P E.

Murder, and *Modesty*!—Whence, all this Shame?

E U M E N E S.

Respect, Confusion,—something, *here*—*un-nam'd*,
And never felt, till *now*,—have bound my Tongue.
But—oh! do Justice, to your Power to shake me;
And, let not *Hesitation*—pass—for *Guilt*.

M E R O P E.

Go on.--Who was he, whom, I'm told, thou ha'st kill'd?

E U M E N E S.

One, who with Wrongs, and Insult, fir'd my Rashness.
One, who was Young, like *me*; but, sure, less *bonest*.

M E R O P E.

Young!--was he young?--speak; *tell* me.--No.--*bedumb*.
Ice, at my conscious Heart, were *warm*—compar'd
With what he chills my Soul with!—Did'st thou
know him?

E U M E N E S.

I did *not*. All *Mycené's* Earth, and Air,
Her Cities, and her Sons, are new, to *me*.

M E R O P E.

What, was he *arm'd*, this young Assaulter? came he
With *Malice*? or for *Robbery*? Be of Comfort.
If he attack'd thee, thy Defence was necessary,
And sad Necessity makes All things just.

A TRAGEDY.

29

EUMENES.

Heaven is my Witness, I provok'd him not.

'Tis not in Valour's Wish, to offer Insult:

And sure! it is no Crime, to check it, offer'd.

MEROPE.

On, then—relate the Chance, that led thee hither.

EUMENES.

Entr'ing your Borders, I beheld a Temple,

Sacred to *Hercules*; the God, my Soul

Low, as my Lot was cast, *aspires* to Honour.

—What shou'd I do? bare Vot'ry as I was!

I had no *Off'rings*: brought no *Victims*, with me.

Poor, and oppress'd by Fortune, what I cou'd

I gave—I knelt, and pour'd a Heart before him,

Warm, as a hundred Hecatombs! pure, prideless,

Pious, and firm.—'Th' Unhappy can no more.

—Yet, humbly conscious of my far-thrown Distance,

I ask'd not, for *myself*, his undue Blessing.

I pray'd Protection, to his *own* high Race:

For, I had heard, Great Queen! your Wrongs requir'd

The *Present* God, methought, receiv'd my Prayer. [it.

His Altar trembled; and his Temple rung!

Keen, undulating, Glories beam'd, about me:

I know not how I bore it!—but, my Heart,

Full of the Force infus'd, at once grew *Vaster*.

My swelling Courage, far *above* myself,

Inflam'd me:—and I glow'd, with All the God.

MEROPE. (*Rising in Emotion.*)

Speak on. Methinks, the God thou nam'st speaks in

And Ev'ry Hearer glows, as warm'd as Thou! [thee!

EUMENES.

I bow'd, and left the Temple.—Following, came

Two Men, of haughty Stride, with angry Lowre: I

Roughly, accosting, they reproach'd my Prayer.

How did I dare, they ask'd, solicit Heaven,

To aid Sedition's Purposes? No God

Shou'd save a Wretch like me, prescrib'd by Power.

—I heard, astonish'd; and prepar'd to speak:

When,

When, with impatient Fierceness, Each rais'd Arm,
With Rage conjoin'd, came on.

M E R O P E. *Interrupting.*

Both!—Came they, *Both,*

To wound thee?—

E U M E N E S.

Both, with more than Madman's Frenzy,
Struck at my Breast, ignobly.

M E R O P E.

Thou has eas'd me.

Go on.—These Men had Souls, that match'd their Fate.

E U M E N E S.

Un-arm'd, and inoffensive, so surpriz'd,
The God I had address'd *repaid* my Prayer.
—Warding the weakest Stroke, with swordless Hand,
Fiercely I clos'd, and seiz'd the wrested Steel
From Him whose stronger Arm more nearly press'd me.
Seiz'd it with Light'ning's Swiftnefs: for, Distress
Rowses the *weak*, to Vengeance.—On Himself,
I turn'd his pointed Weapon: sav'd my Breast;
And plung'd it in His own.—He fell.—The Other
Started, and curs'd: but, like a Coward, *fled*,
False to his dying Fellow.—Mighty Queen,
This is the sad short Truth. May the kind Power
I bow'd to, touch your Ear; and move your Pity!

M E R O P E.

She were a Tygres, that cou'd hear this Tale,
And pause, upon thy Pardon.—Still, go on:
How wer't thou seiz'd? hide Nothing: and hope All.

E U M E N E S.

Shock'd by uncertain Dread for what was done,
And ignorant *Whose* the Blood; which, looking down,
I saw, gush wide, and stain th' incircling Sand;
I gaz'd astonish'd round: and mark'd, beneath,
Where, at a Furlong's Distance, the Salt wave
Broke on the pebbly shore with mournful Murmur.
Sudden I snatch'd the Corps, from where It bled:
And, hast'ning to the Beach, with *added Weight*,

(Appealing

(Appealing *Neptune*,) gave it to the Sea. [Queen,
That done, I sigh'd, and fled: Your Guards, great
For what escapes such Eyes, as *Heaven's*, and *Chairs*!
Unseen by me, mark'd all; follow'd, and took me.

MEROPE. To Euricles,
Did he resist, when seiz'd?

EUMENES.

I cou'd not, Madam.
The Name of *Merope* disarm'd my Will.
They told me they were Yours. I bow'd, and yielded:
Gave 'em my new-gain'd *Sword*: and took their *Chains*.

EURICLES.

This Youth, by Him he kill'd, was judg'd *Another*.

MEROPE.

Oh! I have noted All: and Heaven was just.
—Retire, to farther Distance, gentle Youth.—
'Tis well. Wait, there, my Call.—I'll tell the, *Euricles*!
Methought, at every Word this Wanderer spoke,
Pity—or Something, *tenderer* than Pity,
Clung to my aking Heartstrings! nay, 'twas *stranger*!
For, I will tell thee All.—*Cresphontes*' Features,
My dear dead manly *Lord's* resembled Features;
I saw, and trac'd, (I blush, to think what Folly!)
Trac'd,—in this Cottage Hero's honest Face.

ISMENE.

Compassion is a kind and generous Painter.
—Yet, Truth Herself must grow as *blind*, as Fortune,
Ere she cou'd look on That unhappy Youth;
And find him *less*, than worth her kindest Pity.

EURICLES.

Ismene speaks my Thoughts. He's innocent.
The Gods have stamp'd their Mark of Candor on him:
And no *Imposter's Art* inhabits there.

MEROPE. To Eumenes
Again, approach me.—In what Part of Greece
Did it please Heaven to give thee Birth, good Youth?

EUMENES. Advancing.
In *Ehis*, generous Queen.

MEROPE.

MEROPE,

MEROPE.

In *Elis*.—Tell me.

I hop'd, it had been nearer.—Hast thou, ever,
In thy low Converse, heard the Swains, thy Neighbours,
Mention a Name, like *Narbas*?—or *Eumenes*?—
—The Last, thou *must* have heard of.

EUMENES.

Never, Madam.

MEROPE.

Never?—That's *strange*! what then was thy Condition?
What thy Employment? and thy Father's Name?

EUMENES.

My Father was a *Shepherd*: learn'd, and wise,
Too humble for Distinction—had not Virtue
Compell'd him, into Notice.—Shunning Praise,
He sought Felicity, in silent Search
Of un-endang'ring Worth, and *inself* Greatness.
He liv'd un-envied: for, excelling All,
He veil'd superior Eminence, by *Modesty*:
And made Subjection Sweet, by Power's Humility.
No claim'd Exemption eas'd his Life from Care:
Peacefully poor! and reverently belov'd!
His fleecy Harvests fed him:—and, his Name
Was *Policetes*, Madam.

MEROPE.

What Thy Own?

EUMENES.

Low, like my past'ral Care—to Cottage Ears
Adapted—and unform'd for *Queen's* Regard.
—Yet, *Elis*, oft, will deign to speak of—*Dorilas*.

MEROPE. (*Aside*.)

Oh! I have lost my Hope. Heaven mocks Relief!
And every starting Spark is quench'd, in Darkness.
So, then, your Parents held no Rank in *Elis*?

EUMENES.

Did Place draw Claim from Goodness, they had held
Preferment, with the Highest—But their *Virtues*,
Left Room for no Enlargement.—*Native Eminence*
Borrow'd

A TRAGEDY.

25

Borrows no Rank from *Title* — but *lends* All,
That keeps *Contempt* from Greatness.

M E R O P E.

Every Word
He utters has a Charm! — But, *Why*, at home
So bless'd, and, to *such* Parents, doubly dear,
Didst thou, forgetful of the Care thou owd'st 'em,
Quit their kind *Cott*, and leave 'em to their *Tears*?

E U M E N E S.

A vain Desire of *Glory*, first, seduc'd me.
Oft had I heard my Father mourn *Mycene*,
Weep, for her Civil Wars, and suff'ring *Queen*.
Oft, had He charm'd my young, aspiring, Soul,
With Wonder, at your Firmness! — So, inflam'd,
I learnt, by slow Degrees, to think strong *Youth*
Disgrac'd, by home-felt Virtues: Weigh'd the Call
Of *Glory*, against *Duty*; and grew bold
To hope, my humble Arm might add some Help,
To prop your warring Standards. — See! great *Queen*,
The sole *Seduction*, of my erring Rashness.
For, Heaven has taught me, tho' It loves your Cause,
I merit my Distress: who left my Father,
Wanting, perhaps, in Age's feeble Calls,
Some Aids, I might have lent him. — 'Twas a Fault.
But, 'twas my *first*: And I may live, to mend it.

M E R O P E.

[*aside*.

Methinks, I hear *Eumenes* — So, my Soul
Informs me, had He known Descent, thus lowly,
So, *My Eumenes* wou'd have thought, and spoke.
— Such, is his Age, where'er conceal'd he mourns:
Perhaps too, such his Fortune—driven, like *This*,
From Realm to Realm, a Wand'rer, thus unknown!
Friendless, and hopeless, and expos'd to Poverty!
— Oh! what Compassion will not Woes we suffer
Inspire, for *Other's* Sufferings! — Too secure,
Thou stand'st, unfeeling Bride! and look'st not round thee.
— I will have Pity, on this Youth's Distress:
And cultivate his Fortune. — What bold Noise?

[*Shouts heard without*.

C

Whence

Whence can such Rudeness flow!—Look out, *Ismene*.

I S M E N E. [at a Window.

All Ills are *Poliphontes*. The vile Rabble
Shout their sure Vote, for Treason. *Poliphontes*
Is *King*, proclaim'd,—and Hope is now no more.

E U R I C L E S.

'Tis the *last* Evil.—Faith *may*, still, find Friends.
All grow not giddy, when the Public *reels*.

E U M E N E S.

Oh! for the *Sword*, oncemore, your Guards took from me!
Now, now, I *feel* these Chains: Now, first, they *bind* me.

M E R O P E.

Give him his *Sword*. Let him be free, as Air.
Honest Proposer!——but, *Thy* Help's too weak,
To prop a Throne, in Danger. — Wait, without,
'Till this kind Lord conducts thee into Safety.

E U M E N E S.

O, Queen!—*forgive* Presumption, in the *Poor*,
When *They* dare pity Greatness.

M E R O P E.

Thou art Great;

By *Nature's* Gift:——or, less than low, by *Art's*!

E U M E N E S.

All have their Mis'ries.—but, when *Crowns* grow wretched,
'Tis Impudence, in *mean* ones, to complain.

[Exit Eumenes.

E U R I C L E S.

Too fatally, I prophesied.——Confess
This hard Necessity: which, now, you find;
And *seem*, at least, to sooth the Tyrant's Hope.

M E R O P E.

I misconceiv'd the Gods. I durst not dream,
They cou'd have bid Guilt thrive: and given up *Virtue*.

E U R I C L E S.

They *will not*, Madam.

M E R O P E.

So, my sad Heart, still,
Struggles to hope: and, if they mark my *Woe*,
They will forgive my *Rashness*.

E U R I-

A TRAGEDY.

27

EURICLES.

Come, what must I
I will assemble round you the few faithful,
And, failing to protect, partake your Fall.

[Exit Euricles.]

SCENE III.

MEROPE. ISMENE.

MEROPE.

O, People! People! They, who trust your Faith,
Bid the wild Winds blow constant.

ISMENE.

'Tis their Love,
Their ill-judg'd Tenderness, not Lightness, wrongs you.
They weigh your late-past Dangers, dread Renewal:
And wou'd secure, by this bold Partner's Share,
Your nobler, in the Crown, His Power protects.

MEROPE.

Insolent Care!—shall Subjects to my Son
Wed me to Insult!—to the Hand I hate!

ISMENE.

They call the People's Voice, the Voice of Gods.

MEROPE.

What villain Baseness wants some bold Pretence
That drags in Heaven, to grace it? Thefts, Plots, Perjuries,
Avarice, Revenge, the bloody Zeal, of Pride,
And unforgiving Bitterness of Heart;
All,—have their Gods to friend! their Priests, to sanctifie.

SCENE IV.

Merope, Ismene. Euricles, with a Sword.

EURICLES.

Sorrows on Sorrows bear down Hope's last Prop.
Now, be a Queen, indeed!—arm your great Heart,

With Preparation, to its utmost Stretch :

—For, if it stands *this* Shock, its Power's immortal.

M E R O P E.

No—I am sinking, from all *Sense* of Pain :

And shall grow *safe*, by Want of Strength to suffer.

Speak.—there is now but one sad Truth to dread :

And my Soul waits it heard ;—then, rests, for ever.

E U R I C L E S.

It has pleas'd Heaven—this *Sword* ! this fatal *Sword* !

M E R O P E.

I understand thee ; thou woud'st say, he's *dead*.

E U R I C L E S.

Oh ! 'tis too surely so : th' atrocious Crime

At last, succeeded—and all Care is vain.

M E R O P E.

Gods ! Gods ! — 'tis done. — And all your Bolts have struck me.

I S M E N E.

Guard her distracted Brain !

E U R I C L E S.

Save her, kind Heaven !

M E R O P E.

Where have I been ?

E U R I C L E S.

Alas ! where Grief, too often,

Has lodg'd, and left, th' Unhappy.—recollect.

M E R O P E.

Oh ! *Euricles* : I recollect, too much.

E U R I C L E S.

Forget it—for a few short Moment's Respite,

M E R O P E.

Trust my sustaining Heart. It breaks not, yet.

Comfort's brief Cloud, methought, came shadowing,
o'er me.

But I am *found*, again : a Wretch, so friendless,
That *Madness* will not lend Relief : but *shuns* me.

E U R I C L E S.

Perish, That young, that impious Hypocrite !

That ill-admir'd Attractor of your Pity :

Whom your Protection spar'd—for fancied Virtue !

M E-

a TRAGEDY.

29

M E R O P E.

Who?—What?—

I S M E N E.

Not Dorilas?

E U R I C L E S.

Him, Him,—That Dorilas.

M E R O P E.

Monster! beyond all Credit of Deceit!

I S M E N E.

He!—'tis impossible.

E U R I C L E S.

He was the Murderer.

I bring too clear a Proof. Passing, but now;
I found him waiting: freed him from his Chains;
And, to re-arm him, for the Cause he chose;
Call'd for his *Sword*—Which, as he stretch'd his Hand
To take, I mark'd, and trembled at the View,
These once-known *Gems*—too well remember'd, *here!*

M E R O P E — *taking the Sword.*

Oh, All ye sleeping Gods! 'twas My *Cresphontes!*
'Twas the *King's* Sword. *Narbas*, beyond all Doubting,
Sav'd it, that dreadful Night, for my *Eumenes*.
Oh! what a false vile Tale has this taught Fury,
This practis'd, art-accomplish'd, Flatterer form'd,
To cheat us into Pardon!

E U R I C L E S.

Heaven best knows,

What *Number* of Associate Villains *join'd*,
To perpetrate this Crime! for, ah! too sure,
No single Murd'rer's Hand had Force to *dare*,
Far less to triumph o'er, a Prince like Ours.
No Blood of *Hercules* is shed so tamely.

M E R O P E.

Take the dumb dreadful Witness from my Sight.

[*giving Euricles the Sword.*

Yet, stay.—return it me.—

[*resumes the Sword—and kneels.*

—I thank ye—Gods!

C 3

Thank

Thank your inspiring Justice : and *accept* it.
Live, *but* to thank you,—for this dire, due, Sacrifice ;
Which, from the childless Mother's widow'd Hand,
Your Heav'n-directed Vengeance well *demands*.

[*she rises.*]

Yes. I will *sheathe* it, on my Husband's Tomb,
Deep, in the *bleeding* Murd'rer's panting Heart ;
Then, scorning *Poliphontes*, pierce my *own* ;
So, die, reveng'd, and safe,—*absolving* Heaven.
—Go, *Euricles*.—

E U R I C L E S.

Not *so*.—Yet, *bear* his Sight :
That, from his own dire Mouth, we may compell
Discovery, of his Guilt's commission'd *Cause* :
And, to the Bottom, search this horrid Tale.

[*Exit Euricles.*]

I S M E N E.

Erox!—the Tyrant's Minister of Death.

S C E N E V.

M E R O P E. I S M E N E. E R O X.

E R O X.

[*aside.*]

Now, aid me, wily Powers of winning Art!

M E R O P E.

How now! What bold Intrusion plac'd thee here?

E R O X.

Queen, of the Kingdom's Lord! his Heart's high
Empress!

Suffer a Voice unequal to the Task,
To wrong th' intrusted Sense of *his* told Grief
Who sends me to *condole* you.—*Poliphontes*,
Had you but smooth'd that Brow's Majestic Bend,
I meant to have said, the *King*,—this Moment, heard
The Fate, most pitied, of the Prince, your *Son*
Heard, and takes equal Part, in all your Wrongs.

M E R O P E.

More, than his Part, he takes, in what is *Mine*.

Else,

Else, had he never dar'd aspire, to seize
His Master's Throne; nor *Name* my murder'd Son.

E R O X.

Wishing, he waits but *Leave*: Respect is *delicate*,
And wou'd not, un-admitted, *now*, approach.
Fain wou'd he talk of Comfort, to *your* Sorrows,
Who, weeping, wants the Power to curb his *own*.

M E R O P E.

What wou'd your artful Sender come, to *say*?

E R O X.

To beg, that to *his* Hand you wou'd commit
This hateful Murd'rer's *Punishment*.—He glows
For Vengeance on such Guilt. Shou'd think his Claim
Unworthy a Crown's Trust; less worthy *yours*,
Cou'd he forget, that *Justice* props a Throne.

M E R O P E.

No. Tell him *no*. My Hand revenges, *here*.
Too short of Reach, Heaven knows! but, what it *can*
It *shall*: and neither asks, nor bears, *his* Aid.

E R O X.

The King too tenderly regards your Will,
To cross it, ev'n in *Anger*.—less, in *Reason*.
—I humbly take my Leave.

M E R O P E.

I grant it, gladly.

[Exit Erox.

Hunted on every Side, why waits Distress,
Till still *new* Growths of Anguish, *more*, oppress?
How poor a Thing is *Life*, drag'd on to Age,
To stand, the pitied Mark, of Fortune's Rage!
Death shuts out Mis'ry: and can, best, restrain
The Rack of Insult, and the *Wring* of Pain.

The End of the Second ACT.



A C T III. S C E N E I.

The Tomb of C R E S P H O N T E S.

N A R B A S alone.

H A I L, venerable *Ghost*! hail, sacred *Tomb*!
 Hail, heartwept *Manes* of my *murder'd Lord*!
 My *last* sad Object, in *Mycene's Domes*,
 Was *Thy* majestic Eyebeam quench'd in Blood!
 Now, late returning, my *own* dim old Sight
 Weeps into *Blindness*, o'er this *King's Last Bed*:
 Where silent Marble veils imperial Dust,
 And spares, from All thy Power, but This poor *Stone*,
 To bound Thy death-shrunk Reign!—yet, *here*, even

HERE!

Sigh'd but *Eumenes* o'er this solemn Scene,
Narbas had hop'd to soothe Thy sorrowing *Shade*.

How shall I meet his *Mother's* mournful Eye,
 Who bring *new* Weight, to Woes o'ercharg'd before,
 From every madd'ning Street, I hear loud Shouts,
 Those execrable Bawds, to flatter'd Power!

Proclaim the Traitor *Poliphontes*, King.

He! who, from Clime to Clime, track'd our sad Way!
 Held, like a hunted Deer, his Prince, in Chace;
 Hot in Pursuit, for *Murder*!—Each known Prospect,
 Each Point, each Outlet of this neighb'ring Palace,
 Brings to afflicted Mem'ry some new Stroke
 Of Sorrow, fresh to Pain—tho' fifteen Winters
 Have snow'd their whiteness on me, since they fell!
 Wou'd, I cou'd find the Face of some old Friend!
 But, what Court Friendship's Life lasts, fifteen Winters:
 —Soft. Whom has Heaven sent, here! If Innocence—
 Dwells yet on Earth, such Looks as these must house it.

[Starts, as *Ismene* comes nearer.

Bless

Bless the resembled *Mother's* copied Softness!
'Tis my *Ismene*: 'Tis my own dear *Daughter*.
Time cannot hide her, from a Parent's Eye:
Child as she was—and chang'd since last I saw her.

SCENE II.

Narbas, *Ismene*, follow'd by a Train of Virgins in white, who bring Baskets, and strew Flowers on the Tomb.

I S M E N E.

Who is this bold Unknown? So sagely form'd!
Yet indiscretely rude—at such an Hour,
To break, abruptly, on the Queen's sad Purpose!

N A R B A S.

Fairest, of Forms——

I S M E N E.

Who are you?

N A R B A S.

Chide me not,

Sweet Picture of the Powers, who shed soft Pity!
—I am a very friendless, weak, old Man.
Once, I was Servant, to the Queen you serve;
O, grant the gracious Privilege, to see her.

I S M E N E.

Rev'rend, and Wise! The first, I see you are:
The last, my Heart conceives you—what a Time
Have your misguided Wants unaptly chosen!
Your Sight wou'd, now, offend her.—Deep Distress,
From dire Solemnity of Purpose, brings her,
—Twere prudent to withdraw.

N A R B A S.—

[in a low Voice.

Come near—*Ismene*.

I S M E N E.

Immortal Powers! Who can it be?—He knows me!
Fain wou'd I mix wild *Hope*, with Fear and Wonder.

[approaching him.

N A R-

M E R O P E,

N A R B A S.

Thou art my *Child*. Kind Heaven has sent thee, to me.
—Be cautious—and observe.

I S M E N E

[Kneeling.

Prophetic Heart!

Oh, Sir——I *cannot* speak!

N A R B A S,

[raising her.

Hide thy Surprise,

Ere yet some dang'rous *Note* detects our Meeting.—Soft as thy Eyes *Ismene*, be thy *Voice*.

And answer, to my Question—where is the Queen?

I S M E N E.

She lives, this moment: but the next, she *dies*.

Sorrowing she comes,—to offer on this Tomb,

Her Life's *last* Sacrifice—a dreadful Victim!—The *Murderer* of her Son.

N A R B A S.

Eumenes, dead?—

I S M E N E.

Alas, Sir! cou'd you be a Stranger to it?

N A R B A S.

Blast! to my Soul's best Hope. — Who *dar'd* this
Villainy?

I S M E N E.

A Youth, who found him in *Alcides' Temple*.

One, from whose Air of manly Modesty

None, surely cou'd have fear'd—behold! he *comes*.

That fetter'd Criminal is He.—— Oh, Sir!

Where will you, now, be hid?

N A R B A S.

In Death, *Ismene*:If I now hear and see—and am not *dreaming*!

I S M E N E.

From the Queen's Eye, I dare no longer.—

N A R B A S

[holding her.

Stay.

Queens, Kings, nor Gods, shall tear thee from my
Till thou hast heard me fully

[Arm,

I S M E N E.

Speak—Command.

SCENE

a TRAGEDY.

35

S C E N E III.

Solemn Procession to a Dead March. Meropé. Euricles, with the Sword. Eumenes, in Chains. Guards. Priests, as to Sacrifice.—The Queen goes up weeping, and kneels silent, at the Tomb. While the Rest range themselves, on each Side the Scene.

N A R B A S, to I S M E N E.

Some black-soul'd Fiend, some Fury ris'n from Hell,
Has darken'd all Discernment!—Call'dst thou not
That fetter'd Youth the *Murd'rer* of *Eumenes*?

I S M E N E.

I call'd him so, too truly.

N A R B A S.

He is *Eumenes*.

What angry God misleads the Queen, to Madness?
She dreams *Eumenes* kill'd—and kills *Eumenes*!

I S M E N E.

Now are my Heart's late Tremblings well explain'd.
Quick let me rush, and warn her erring Hand.

N A R B A S.

Not, for a thousand Worlds—to save him, So,
Were but to lose him, *Surer*.——*Polipbontes*
Has Ears and Eyes too near us.—Pray; and be dumb.

Sad and solemn Musick. Then a SONG, of Sacrifice:
by Mr. Beard, as Chief Priest.

I.

Hear, from the dark and silent Shade!

Hear, ye pale Bands of Death!

Gliding from Graves, where once your Bones were laid,
Receive a Murd'rer's Breath.

Chorus, of Priests and Virgins.

Receive a Murd'rer's Breath.

II.

Doom'd to atone the Blood he drew,

Fates! lend your *Ebon Bowl*.

Take the devoted Stream, to Vengeance due,
And catch the parting Soul.

Chorus,

Chorus, of Priests and Virgins.

And catch the parting Soul.

M E R O P E, rising and coming forward.

Where is this Victim—odious, to All Powers,
But *one*,—the dreadful *Nemesis*?

The Guards bring up Eumenes.

E U R I C L E S.

Yet, er'e he dies,

'Twere fit, some Force of Torture should compell him
To name his vile Accomplices.

M E R O P E.

It shall.

Say, Monster! what provok'd thee to this Guilt:
And what Associates join'd thee.

E U M E N E S.

I appeal

The Gods, who find it fit my Soul shou'd buy,
At this dear Rate, the Moment's Hope you lent it;
Those *Gods* can *witness* for me; They! who curse
The perjurd, and disclaim the Base one's Safety.
My Lips detest Imposture: bold, and clear
As Day's un sullied Light, they trace Truth, *plainly*.
—Nor know I, by what Change, in Heav'ns high Will,
I, who of late so bless'd, had touch'd your *Pity*,
Fall, now, beneath your *Anger*!

M E R O P E, taking the Sword, from Euricles.

View this Sword.

Know you the dreadful Object.

E U M E N E S.

'Twas the Villain's,

My just Hand punish'd with it.

M E R O P E.

Seize him. Rend him.

Swift to the trembling Altar, drag the Traitor.

He *owns* it! glories, in his bloody Crime:

And my shock'd Soul *akes*, at him.

The Guards seize him.

E U M E N E S.

a TRAGEDY.

37

EUMENES—*struggling.*

Off—away—

Stay your resisted Rage.—I *will* be heard;
One last loud Word—in Spite of Arms and Insult.

MEROPE—*after a Signal to the Guards, who quit Eumenes.*

Thou then, who deal'st in Death, can'st find Death fearful.

EUMENES.

No, Madam! you mistake. Death shakes the *happy*:
But He who is a Wretch receives him gladly.

—Yet, 'gainst imputed Guilt, the humblest, wrong'd,
Rise, in bold Innocence, resign'd, no longer.

—Low as I am, and you so rais'd in Power,
Were not your *Griefs* more awful than your *Anger*,
I had reproach'd your Rage, and blam'd your Blindness.

—Tell me, nor let your Pride deface your Pity,
Whose, so high-rated Blood was This I shed?

And what new Int'rest finds he, in your Favour?

—If he was dear to *You*, curs'd be my Memory,
Or I had rather lost my *Own*, than *His*.

MEROPE.

Where has this cruel Wretch been taught Deceit?

Why was that Look, so like *Cresphontes*, His!

Half fainting.

EURICLES.

Great Queen! sustain your Purpose. Think of *Vengeance*.
The *Laws* of Nature,—and the Lives of Kings.

EUMENES.

Do *Laws* and Kings, then, call Injustice *Vengeance*?
Shame on the Great! why long'd my Eyes for *Courts*?

Courts, where the Pride of Guilt lays Claim to Honour.

—Haughty of Heart, why have they Souls thus abject?

You threaten, praise, fright, flatter, and insult me!

—Gods! what a creeping climbing, hot cold, Creature,
Is this big little Flatt'rer, call'd a *Courtier*!

—Yet, oh! 'twas *just*.—I left my Father, rashly;

Felt not HIS Pangs: weigh'd not the Tears I cost him.

Fate drew me from my Forest's crimeless Quiet,

Into

Into the World's loud Insignificance;
Deaf to the Warnings of a Father's Wisdom:
And a griev'd Mother's Bodings.

M E R O P E.

Mother, said he!

Barbarian! ha'st thou yet a *Mother*, left thee?
I *was* a Mother, too.—till Thy *fell* Hand
Depriv'd me of a *Son*—and all Life's Comforts.

E U M E N E S.

A Son! ——— *your* Son?

M E R O P E.

Mine, Monster! Murd'rer! Mine.

E U M E N E S.

If *Such* was my Misfortune, *Such* my *Curse*,
If Heaven has made it *possible*——that He,
Who, in a fatal Moment, err'd—and fell
By my ill-destin'd Rashness, was *Your* Son,
Earth holds not such another Wretch as I am!
And Mercy's faintest Glimpse shou'd shun to reach me.

M E R O P E.

Perfidious, execrable Slave!

E U M E N E S.

Yet, *hear* me.

*Eumenes, here, offers to speak, and Merope
interrupts him.*

—Stop his detested Mouth.—If thou dar'st *pray*,
Raise thy dumb *Hands*: and ask, in vain, from Heaven,
The Mercy, thou denied'st my dying Son.
Force the doom'd Victim to the Altar's Foot,
Veil him from *Light*, no more to be beheld:
Hide his quench'd *Eyes*, for ever.

*Two Priests approaching, with a Veil, he snatches
it, and throws it from him.*

E U M E N E S.

Off! ye vain Forms!

Cover the Eyes of Cowards: Mine disdain ye.
Mine can, with stedfast and *advancing* Scorn,
Look in Death's *Face*, fullsighted.—When It comes
Tis to be *met*, not *bid*.—On.—I *provoke* it.

Welcome,

a TRAGEDY.

39

Welcome, Eternal Day!—Bad World, farewell.

*Advances, between the Priests, to the Tomb—follow'd
by the Queen, Euricles, Ismene, &c.*

M E R O P E. *At the Tomb—with the Sword drawn, and
Eumenes kneeling ready.*

Shade, of my Murder'd Husband!—hear my Call.

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! hear.

M E R O P E.

Soul, of my bleeding Son! hear, thou—

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! hear.

M E R O P E.

Un-expiated Souls!—if, in those Glooms,
Where walk the fullen Ghosts of earth-wrong'd Kings,
You hear Atonement's Voice, and wait Redress,
Rise, from your dark Domains!

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! rise.

M E R O P E.

———Thou, last,

Tremend'ous Power! pale Goddess! present, still,
To direful Vengeance! nerve this lifted Arm,
And thus assisting——

*Ismene preventing the Blow, Narbas breaks
into Sight, and cries out loudly,*

Stay, Stay that bloody Purpose.

Death has already been too busy, here:

And Heaven disclaims such Sacrifice.

M E R O P E, *in a frighted and trembling Attitude,*
Who art thou?

I S M E N E—aside—to the Queen.

Your Victim is your Son,——the Prince, Eumenes.

Meropé lets fall the Sword—astonish'd, and trembling.

E U M E N E S—raising himself to look round.

I heard a well-known Voice, now heard no longer.
Emerge, sad Eyes! once more, from the Graves Brink,
To view what seem'd—oh! tis—It is—My Father!

Narbas.

Into the World's loud Insignificance;
Deaf to the Warnings of a Father's Wisdom:
And a griev'd Mother's Bodings.

M E R O P E.

Mother, said he!

Barbarian! ha'st thou yet a *Mother*, left thee?
I *was* a Mother, too.—till Thy *fell* Hand
Depriv'd me of a *Son*—and all Life's Comforts.

E U M E N E S.

A Son! ——— *your* Son?

M E R O P E.

Mine, Monster! Murd'rer! Mine.

E U M E N E S.

If *Such* was my Misfortune, *Such* my *Curse*,
If Heaven has made it *possible*——that He,
Who, in a fatal Moment, err'd—and fell
By my ill-destin'd Rashness, was *Your* Son,
Earth holds not such another Wretch as I am!
And Mercy's faintest Glimpse shou'd shun to reach me.

M E R O P E.

Perfidious, execrable Slave!

E U M E N E S.

Yet, *bear* me.

*Eumenes, here, offers to speak, and Meropé
interrupts him.*

—Stop his detested Mouth.—If thou dar'st *pray*,
Raise thy dumb *Hands*: and ask, in vain, from Heaven,
The Mercy, thou denied'st my dying Son.
Force the doom'd Victim to the Altar's Foot,
Veil him from *Light*, no more to be beheld:
Hide his quench'd *Eyes*, for ever.

*Two Priests approaching, with a Veil, he snatches
it, and throws it from him.*

E U M E N E S.

Off! ye vain *Forms*!

Cover the Eyes of Cowards: Mine disdain ye.
Mine can, with steadfast and *advancing* Scorn,
Look in Death's *Face*, fullsighted.—When It comes
Tis to be *met*, not *bid*.—On.—I *provoke* it.

Welcome,

a TRAGEDY.

39

Welcome, Eternal Day!—Bad World, farewell.

*Advances, between the Priests, to the Tomb—follow'd
by the Queen, Euricles, Ismene, &c.*

MEROPE. *At the Tomb—with the Sword drawn, and
Eumenes kneeling ready.*

Shade, of my Murder'd Husband!—hear my Call.

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! hear.

MEROPE.

Soul, of my bleeding Son! hear, thou—

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! hear.

MEROPE.

Un-expiated Souls!—if, in those Glooms,
Where walk the fullen Ghosts of earth-wrong'd Kings,
You hear Atonement's Voice, and wait Redress,
Rise, from your dark Domains!

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Ob! rise.

MEROPE.

———Thou, last,

Tremend'ous Power! pale Goddess! present, still,
To direful Vengeance! nerve this lifted Arm,
And thus assisting——

*Ismene preventing the Blow, Narbas breaks
into Sight, and cries out loudly,*

Stay, Stay that bloody Purpose.

Death has already been too busy, here:

And Heaven disclaims such Sacrifice.

MEROPE, in a frighted and trembling Attitude,
Who art thou?

ISMENE—*aside—to the Queen.*

Your Victim is your Son,——the Prince, Eumenes.

Meropé lets fall the Sword—astonish'd, and trembling.

EUMENES—*raising himself to look round.*

I heard a well-known Voice, now heard no longer.
Emerge, sad Eyes! once more, from the Graves Brink,
To view what seem'd—oh! tis—It is—My Father!

Narbas.

M E R O P E,

NARBAS *aside, to EUMENES.*

Hear : and be dumb. Thy Fate, unwary Youth !
Depends upon thy *Silence.*

E U M E N E S.

Whence, ye dark Powers !
Can all these Myst'ries rise !

M E R O P E.

Oh !—'tis too much—
And Life and I are *lost.*

Faints : and is supported by Ismene.

I S M E N E.

Stay your unhallow'd Rites : the Queen's in Danger.

E U R I C L E S.

Lend us your loyal Help, ye *Virgin Train.*

The Virgins advance.

Quit, rev'rend *Priests !* quit your too bloody Sacrifice.

Exeunt Priests.

And you, ye watchful *Guards !* draw near, and follow.
While I secure the *Victim* for his Fate.

NARBAS — to EUMENES.

Shun me : and patient wait th' important *Cause.*

E U M E N E S.

O, bid me, er'e I die, but hope your Pardon :
And, if I leave you bless'd—'tis all my Prayer.

N A R B A S.

No more.—The Gods, who love, *reward thy Virtue !*

*The Soldiers, and Euricles, go off,
with Eumenes.*

I S M E N E.

Kind Heaven restores the Queen.

N A R B A S.

Off.—give her Air.

M E R O P E.

Where !—whither have ye brought me ?—Where is
Euricles ?

--- *Ismene ?*—what means This !—Why weep my Virgins ?
—Oh ! I have *kill'd* him : — *looking wildly round her*—
for I see him *not :*

And I am doom'd to Pains, in Life immortal.

N A R B A S.

41

~~NARBASU~~

Ease your sad Heart's too apprehensive Startings.
Euricles holds him safe: And nothing's known.

M E R O P E.

Still this kind Vision haunts me.—Art thou *Narbás*?

NARBAS.

Let my *Tears* answer—in this Gush of Joy—
I give you back my Master—your *Eumenes*.

M E R O P E (on her Knees.)—

Oh, gracious Heaven! support a Woman's Weakness:

And, what my *Heart*, yet panting, fails to utter,

Take, from my Soul's touch'd Sense ; and *make* my

Prayer.

You are too *Great*, for Thanks! too *Good*, for Duty!

St. Paul's M. Church, 1880. [Rising]

E U R I C L E S (re-entering hastily.)

Death ! to th^e insatiate Tyrant's Thirst of Insult !

—This Royal Scandal, to the Name he steals,

Has, with some fatal Purpose, seiz'd the King;

And holds him, to examine.

M E R O P E.

Follow me.

Now shall he see, what *Marks* denote the *Queen* ;

What *Diff'rence*, 'twixt the Guilty, and the Wrong'd.

NARRBAS (going.) H b' xā ym ! dO

Madam!—It must not be.

EURICLES.

Stay : Curb this Rashness.

M E R O P E.

Is he not mine ! Is he not *yours* ?—your King ?
 F. H. B. L. G. L. E. S.

ARTICLE 5.
I hereby confess That dangerous Truth

The Moment you confess That dang-rous I ruth,
No God, but hated *Human* force Exceeds:

ed Hymen, laves Eumenes.
M E R O R E'

There, thou hast let in Light upon my Soul

There, thou halt let in Light, upon my Soul,
That crowds it with black Shapes, and frights Disdain!

That crowds it with black shapes; and frights Dúdaín!
Rather than eyed this *Poliochentes*.

See this Poliphontes. —
N A P P A S

Wed him?

WED *Poliphontes!*

D EURI-

EUR I-

M E R O P E :

E U R I C L E S.

Him.

N A R B A S.

The World's last Groan,
Wrapt in surrounding Fires, had less amaz'd me!

E U R I C L E S.

'Tis with That View the People call him *King*.
Since he reveng'd *Cressphontes'* Blood, they say,
He, best——

N A R B A S.

He!—Every Curse of Death surround him!
He! He reveng'd!—The Villain's own damn'd Train
Shed,—*spilt* it. I beheld 'em : Trac'd the *Fiend*
Thro' all his dark Disguises——thro' Night's Eye
Saw the pale Murd'rer Stalk, amidst his Furies.
His was the half-hid Torch,——the Postern Key,
That open'd to the Rebel's Rage the Palace.
—In the pierc'd infant Breasts of *two* doom'd Innocents,
I saw him plunge his Poignard : Twice receiv'd it,
Deep, in my *own*, encumber'd with my Charge :
Struggling, to bear the third *sav'd* Prince to shelter ;
And, track'd by my own Blood, with Pain escap'd him.

M E R O P E'.

When will my growing Horrors reach their *End* !
Oh ! my fix'd Hate was *Instinct*. Something, fatal,
Dwelt on his dreadful Brow, and bad me *shun* him.
Blind ! headlong ! ill-discerning ! noise-driv'n People !

E U R I C L E S (looking out.)

Darkness and Death involve me, but he comes !

M E R O P E'.

Can the Gods leave That *possible* ?——the Monster !
But, He who puts on Guilt, must cast off Shame.
——*Narbas*, be *hid*, this Moment—— [*Exit Narbas.*

—— *Euricles* !

Fly thou——find Access to my mournful Son :
See him set free——but keep the Secret from him.

[*Exit Euricles.*

S C E N E

A TRAGEDY.

43

SCENE IV.

Meropé, Ismené, Poliphontes in Nuptial Robes,
Erox, and Train.

POLIPHONTES.

Health, to my *Sovereign*, late! Now—so the States
Decree—my *Wife*!—my *Sister*! and my *Soul*!
Dress'd is the Altar; and the Priests attend.

—Nay, do not turn aside, and shun your Triumph.
Look—and admire the Wonders of your Power!

The God of Love, to-day, smoothes all my Wrinkles:
And I am taught by Joy to smile back *Youth*.

—One Care alone precedes impatient Love.

They tell me, your too tender Heart *recoil'd*:

And *lost* your purpos'd Vengeance.—Let it *be*.

Beauty was meant to wound, a gentler Way:

Mine, be the Stroke of Justice.—When I view

This murd'rous Stripling, thro' the Grief he brought
you,

Pity disdains his Cause; and Fate demands him.

MEROPÉ.

I find myself, 'tis true, too weak, for Vengeance.

Wou'd I had Power, more equal to my Wrongs!

POLIPHONTES.

Leave it to *Me*: 'Tis a King's Right.—I claim it.

MEROPÉ.

I shall consider of it.

POLIPHONTES.

Why; what doubt you?

Slackens your Anger? that your Vengeance hesitates!

Is your Son's Mem'ry now, less dear, than lately?

MEROPÉ.

Perish, the *Will*, that wrongs him! but, this Murd'rer,

This *Youth*—they tell me you suspect Accomplices—

Were it not prudent to suspend his Fate,

'Till he declares, who join'd him?

POLIPHONTES.

What expect you

To clear, beyond your Son's known Fall?

D 2

ME.

M E R O P E'.

His *Father's*——

That was a Cup of *Gall*.—Oh! conscious Guilt!
How dumb, thy Voice, unlook'd-for, strikes the Bold!
[*Aside*.

P O L I P H O N T E S (*after a Pause*.)

Well—ev'n of That too, We ourself will ask him.

M E R O P E'.

You are too busy, Sir! in a Pursuit,
That, least, admits *your* Quick'ning.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Strange Perplexity!

That what most seeks your Ease shou'd most *offend*!
But, spring it, whence it may, the *Cause* remov'd,
There, ends the Doubt, and Pain.——This Wretch
shall *die*. [Going.

M E R O P E'.

Barbarian! horrible, inhuman——*Sir*!
Why have you sought to startle me?——I fear'd——
You meant to snatch my Victim from——my Vengeance.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

But——shall he *really* die?

M E R O P E'.

Die!—*Who*?—He—die?

P O L I P H O N T E S.

This Murd'rer of your Son.

M E R O P E'.

I go, this Moment;

And will, alone, examine him.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Stay, Madam.

This new Embarrassment, of mingled Pains;
This Tenderness in Rage; these Hopes, Fears, Startings,
This Art, to colour some ill-hid Distress,
That casts *Confusion* o'er your troubled Soul:
Half Sentences, broke short; Looks, fill'd with Horror,
Are Nature's thin *Disguise*, to cover Danger.
—Something you will not *tell* alarms my Caution;

And

And bids my summon'd *Fear* take Place of Love.
 —In ent'ring, here, I had a Glimpse, but now,
 Of an old Man, who seem'd to shun my Presence.
 Why is he fled? — Who was he?

M E R O P E'.

Scarce yet call'd
 A King — and see! already fill'd with Jealousies!

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Be kind, and bear your Part, then. — Burthens, shar'd,
 Press light the eas'd Sustainers. — Come; your Hand.

M E R O P E'.

A Moment since, you talk'd but of Revenge:
 Now, 'tis again all Love — Away: Keep separate,
 Two Passions, Nature never, yet, saw join'd.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Let it be so, then. Death shall strait remove
 That Obstacle: And but one Wish remains.
 Follow, at Leisure, you: While I prepare.

[Exit Poliphontes.]

M E R O P E'.

Act for me, now, and save me, Great *Alcides*!
 To Power like thine, all Things are possible:
 And Grief, oppress'd on Earth, finds Friends in Heaven.
 Then when the woe-press'd Heart is tir'd with Care,
 And every human Prospect bids *despair*,
 Break but one Gleam of *heav'nly* Comfort, in;
 And a new Race of *Triumphs*, thence, begin.

End of the Third Act.

ACT. IV. SCENE I.

The Castle of *Poliphontes*.

Poliphontes. Erox.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

SHE has *her* Views, I mine. — I shou'd have fear'd,
 Some Hint's officious Note had reach'd her Ear;

D 3

I shou'd

I shou'd have dreamt, her Eyes had catch'd some
 Glance,
 Some glimm'ring Entrance for admitted Light,
 To guide *Discovery*, down the dark Abyfs,
 Where my close Crime lies *veil'd*. in dumb Obscurity.
 —But, that I know, she is a WOMAN—*Erox!*
 And *born* to be capricious.

E R O X.

Pride—not Distaste,
 Holds out her Heart, against you.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Let her keep it.

My Hope is humbler, *Erox*. 'Tis her Hand
 I seek : *Hearts* are Girls' Gifts to School-boy Lovers.
 Now, let her Spleen start wild. When Time serves aptly,
 Means shall be found to curb it.—Thou art come
 From founding this fierce captive Son of Wonder.
 What have thy Thoughts concluded?

E R O X.

'Tis not *He*.

No Race of *Hercules* need, there, alarm you.
 This but some wood-born Brave, of artless Honesty ;
 Void of Ambition's Flame : Bold, blunt and honest :
 Fearless of Menace, tasteless of Reward,
 And simply wanting *Will*, to dare, for Power.
 He cannot be *Eumenes*.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Who, then, is he?

E R O X.

He says he is a *Shepherd's* Son : —what, more,
 He will not be provok'd, nor brib'd, to tell.
 Firm without Fierceness ; without Weakness, gentle :
 Open as Daylight : yet, as dumb, as Death !
 Spite of my Prejudice, he forc'd my Praise ;
 And *Hatred* must admire him.

P O L I P H O N T E S,

Praise him on.

Be what, or whom, he may, 'tis fit he *die*.
 My Foes, too num'rous, taught me Skill, too try'd,

To

To lean my Hope's light Trust on harlot Fortune.

The *People*, who conclude his Punishment
 Inflicted, for *Eumenes'* fanstied Murder,
 Will dream that Race *extinct*; and cleave to *Me*.
 So Danger comes less near: Nor shakes my Throne.
 —What hast thou learnt, of that conceal'd Presumer,
 Who, when the Arm of *Merope* was rais'd,
 Restrain'd it, with some Power that touch'd her Soul.

EROX.

The young Man call'd him *Father*. Chance, it seems,
 In that nice Moment, brought him to his View.
 He mov'd the Queen's Compassion, for his Son,
 Fled, like a Wanton, from the Good Man's Care,
 Who, in his Search, came forrowing on, from *Elis*.

POLIPHONTES.

I cannot trust this Tale. Thou grow'st too credulous,
 Mysterious Caution hangs too thick a *Veil*
 O'er all their late Proceedings. That old Man,
 Left the Queen's Presence, starting, at my Entrance.
 Why was he hid, if a young Rustick's Father?
 Why shou'd my coming fright him: He has heard
 Since then, his Son's redoubled Danger dwells
 But in my Menace: Yet he comes not near me.
 I had, ere now, beheld him at my Feet,
 Had his Heart trembled with a Father's Terrors.
 —No matter who he is.—He moves my Fear;
 And, ere my Eye-lids close, he sleeps, in Death.

EROX.

See, Sir! he's free—and mark—the Queen, how near!

POLIPHONTES.

I note it, and determine.

—Now! my Sister,

SCENE II.

Poliphontes, Erox, Meropé, Ismené, Euricles, Eumenes,
 and Guards.

MEROPE.

You see, Sir! I dare know, and use, my Rights.
 How had your Will presum'd to hold my Victim?

Am I but Queen of Shadows? that my Vengeance
Must move, as *you* direct it?

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Nobly urg'd!
The Victim is your Right, requires *your* Hand;
Mine had defac'd your Justice.—I assum'd
Pretence to aid it, but to fire your Languor.
Take Courage. I resign him. With his Blood
Wash this reluctant Faintness, from your Heart:
And give it Warmth to meet me at the Altar.

M E R O P E.

Horrid, and impious, Hope!

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Looks *Love* so frightful?

E U M E N E S to Poliphontes.

Who taught thee to associate Love, with *Cruelty*?
What Right has *Cupid* to a Captive's Blood?
—Yet, mispresume not, that I court thy Pity—
He has too poor a View from Life, to prize it,
Whose Death can only serve, to shorten *Pain*.
—But, I am told, Thou call'st thyself a *King*.
Know, if thou *art* one, that the Poor have Rights:
And Power, in all it's Pride, is *less* than *Justice*.
—I am a Stranger,—innocent,—and friendless,—
And That Protection, which thou *ow'st*, to All,
Is doubly due, to me:—For, I'm unhappy.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Protection is for *Worth*:—Guilt calls for Vengeance.

E U M E N E S.

And what does Wrong's licentious *Insult* call for?
—In my own just Defence, I *kill'd* a Robber:
Law call'd it *Murder*; and the Queen condemn'd me.
Queens may *mistake*. Ev'n *Gods*, who *LOVE*, grow *partial*.
I pardon, ev'n th' Injustice, of a *Mother*:
And cou'd have bless'd *her* Hand, beneath the Blow.
Nature has Weaknesses, that *err* to *Virtue*?

—But,

—But, What hast *Thou* to do with Mother's Vengeance?
Law, that shocks *Equity*, is *Reason's* Murder.

POLIPHONTES.

So young! so wretched! — and so *arrogant*!
Methinks, the Pride of an *Alcides'* Blood
Cou'd scarce have swell'd a Soul to loftier *Boldness*!

MEROPE.

Pity presumptuous Heat. 'Tis Youth's Prerogative,
To triumph in Imprudence. Bred, in Cott's,
Far from a Court's Politeness, How should He [ons?
Have learnt Disguise of Thought? or Power's Pretensi-

POLIPHONTES.

Mean while, how happy such unpolish'd Plainness!
To move Defence, from Art so skill'd as *Yours*.

MEROPE. (*aside.*)

Oh! my unguarded Terror! — You are *pleasant*.

POLIPHONTES.

And You are wond'rous *kind*! Your Son, sure! *lives*.

MEROPE.

Lives! and *shall* live. I trust him to the *Gods*:
They *can* — they *did*, protect him.

ISMENE. (*aside.*)

Madam! Madam!

EURICLES. (*aside.*)

Her fear-mix'd Anger will betray her Cause.

POLIPHONTES.

What cannot Woman's Pity! None, who marks
The willing Pardon your soft Looks insure him,
Can charge your Heart with Cruelty.

MEROPE.

My Looks,

Perhaps, hint Meanings, Prudence shou'd decline
To lend too loud a *Tongue* to. — but, there *are*,
Whose *Heart* speaks Nothing: Yet tells *All*, by Actions.

POLIPHONTES.

Mark, if I speak not, *now*, my Heart's true Language.
—— *Traitor! receive thy Doom.* [*Drawing his Sword.*

MEROPE (*interposing*)

Strike *here*, *here*, Murd'rer!

Menace *my* Breast; not *His*.

M E R O P E :

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Whose Heart speak, *now*?

E U M E N E S.

Now, ye Immortals! not to *die*, were, *not*
 To triumph.—To be pitied, *here*! *thus*, pitied!
 By such a Queen as *Meropé*!—'tis Glory
 That every Power beneath a *God* might envy!

P O L I P H O N T E S.

If you wou'd have him live, confess, *Who is he*?

M E R O P E.

He—— is——

E U R I C L E S (to Ismené.)

Oh! we are lost.

I S M E N E.

All, all, is hopeless,

P O L I P H O N T E S.

If he has Right in *You*, be swift to *own* him:
 Or, *lose* him by your Silence.

[Offers to kill Eumenes.]

M E R O P E.

Stay—— he is——

P O L I P H O N T E S.

Who? What?—— say, quickly.

M E R O P E.

He is *My Son*, *Eumenes*.

P O L I P H O N T E S (starting, and aside.)

'Tis as I *fear'd*; and all my Schemes are Air.

[Stands pensively fix'd,

E U M E N E S.

Gods!—— Did I hear *That*, rightly?

M E R O P E (embracing him)

Thou *art* my Son.

Cresphontes was thy Father. I attest it:

I tell it, to the *Winds*: Proclaim it——boast it.Hear it, *Thou* Soul of Murder! I have *found* him:

And, if I lose him, *now*, whole Heaven shall *curse*
 thee.

E U M E N E S.

I cannot comprehend it!——Yet, I kneel,

To

To thank you—but for deigning to deceive me.
Bless'd is his Fate, who dies, in such a Dream!

M E R O P E.

One way, thou art deceiv'd.—The Mother's Love
Forgets the Monarch's Danger.—Poliphontes!

P O L I P H O N T E S (starting)

Go on—I meditated—but—speak, Madam

M E R O P E.

Thou now hast wrung, from my affrighted Heart,
The Secret, that oppress'd it. Thou behold'st
Thy King, distress'd, before thee.—Sigh, if thou can'st,
Sigh,—for the Son, Prince, Mother—Fame, and
Nature.

P O L I P H O N T E S.

How to resolve will ask some needful Pause.
—Mean while, it shakes my Faith, to trust your Story.
You hear, the young Man's Honesty disclaims
This Greatness, you wou'd lend him.

E U M E N E S.

Modest Sense

Of my unequal Worth compell'd some Doubting;
But, now, 'tis Truth contestless. Royal Tears
Flow not for pitied Falsehood; and they prove it.

M E R O P E.

Tears touch not Hearts of Flint; and I will spare 'em.
Bid your * Pride hear me—for, your Pity cannot.

* kneels

See me an humble Suppliant, at your Feet,
Now first confessing I can fear your Anger.
This shou'd, beyond all Proof of Tears, convince you,
That Meropé's his Mother.—Still, you frown:
Forgetful of past Soothings.—But—this Morning,
You, cruel! You,—aspir'd—to be his Father.
Once, he cou'd boast a Father!—how he lost him,
Heaven knows, howe'er it speaks not!—I desist
To ask, that dreadful Secret. I forget
My own long Sorrows—all my Wrongs, and Insults:
Smile to the future—and absolve the past.
—Let him but breathe—to reign, were to be wretched;
Where

Where Kings, who dare live just, must die unhappy.
 —Cruel! you answer nothing!—look less dreadful.
 Hear with your *Eyes*, if your clos'd Ears are *Iron*.
 Ease my distracted Soul—and speak some *Comfort*.

E U M E N E S.

O, Madam! quit that *Posture*.—My proud Heart
 Aspires to *keep* the Glory you have lent it.
 —If I, indeed, was born, to call you Mother,
 Why do I see and hear you, *not a Queen*?

[*Raises her.*

I know not, to what Rights a *King* is born:
 But, sure! he no where falls to less than *greatest*.
 —Nor think my Soul too haughty:—For, *What* Scorn
 Can treat the Proud, too proudly? No Distress
 Absolves *Dejection*: 'Tis the Brave's *Prerogative*,
 To feel, without *complaining*. *Hercules*,
 Before He was a *God*, was, oft, *unhappy*.
 What an unmaist'ring Monarch must *he* make,
 Who reigns not o'er *Adversity*!—Strike, Tyrant—
 Courage, restrain'd from *Aét*, takes *Pride* to *suffer*.

P O L I P H O N T E S (to *Meropé*)

'Tis well. I have, with just *Attention*, heard;
 And, in impartial *Silence*, weigh'd it, all.
 Your *Sorrow* claims some *Right* to call for mine:
 And *his* high *Spirit* charms me. I have mark'd
 Each *Movement* of his *Mind*, and *must* esteem him.
 —Yet further— I confess, he well *deserves*
 To share the *Blood* of *Kings*: But, that he *does*
 Is either *Falsehood*, or a *Truth* so doubtful,
 As brooks no *passion'd* Evidence.—I take him

[*Takes Eumenes by the Hand.*

Into my heedful *Care*; remit his *Sentence*,
 And, if found *Yours*, adopt him as my *Son*.

E U M E N E S.

Yours, said you?—*You!* my *Father!*

M E R O P E.

Oh! be *patient*.

P O L I-

A TRAGEDY.

53

POLIPHONTES.

You rule his Destiny. You know what Price
I rate his Life at. Smile; and meet my Wishes.

MEROPE.

Inhuman Menacer!

POLIPHONTES.

Kind *Love* has sent
This Youth, to save my Heart, from near Despair.
Yours is too tenderly devoted *His*,
To answer with Imprudence. Weigh, and chuse.
For, may the Gods, conjointly, curse my Reign,
If he *survives* Refusal of my Prayer!

——— Bethink you. In an *Hour*, I shall expect you;
Where, at the Altar, to th' attesting Powers,
You may proclaim your *Choice*. That Moment makes
him

My *Victim*, or my *Son*. 'Till then, farewell.

MEROPE.

You *cannot* be so cruel. ——— Leave *him*, with me.
To *see* him, might persuade me.

POLIPHONTES.

See him, *there*:

See him, in *Hymen's Temple*.

EUMENES.

Oh, Queen! oh, Mother!
If I, already, dare assume a Right
To call you, by that dear, that awful Name:
Think, nothing, that may misbecome *your* Glory ———
Do, nothing, that may mix Contempt, with *mine*.
——— I leave you to the Care of Heaven; and *die*.

SCENE III.

Meropé, Euricles, Ismené.

MEROPE.

Fly, follow, *Euricles*! hold thy kind Eye
Fix'd, to this Miscreant's Motions. Fain would I dream,
He threatens, but to fright me.

EURICLES.

Willing Hope
 So flatters, to deceive you. Too, too sure,
 His Purpose! Ev'n by Nature, stern and bloody,
 How *more*, when Power and Safety prompt his Cruelty!
 [Exit Euricles.]

Find thy good Father: Haste *Ismené*; call him.
 Tell him, Distress grows headstrong, and my Soul
 Sickens, for want of Counsel.

What a Blindness
 Is Thirst of human Grandeur! Give me, Gods!
 A Cottage, and Concealment. Save the Queen;
 And, from the Curse of Courts, remotely place me.
 [Exit Ismene.]

No, there is none; no Ruler of the Stars,
 Regardful of my Miseries.——What Crime
 Has drawn these Tortures on me?——I have been
 Too insolent, perhaps, in Youth's proud Joy;
 And felt not, as I ought, for *other's* Sorrows.
 Thence, came this Tempest of Affliction o'er me,
 And my succeeding Years have, all, been Horror.
 Oh, my lov'd Son! my Eyes have lost thee, *ever*.
 I shall no more snatch Comfort, from thy Hopes,
 Or wonder at thy Sweetness.——All thy *Father*
 Found me, *again*, in Thy renew'd Perfection;
 And Death had given him back, with *added Greatness*.

Why have the Deities permitted this?
 Why have they *sported* with a Mortal's Mind,
 Unpitying it's Distraction? sent him to me
 From a far distant Land? Sent him, for what!
 To glut the Murd'rer's *Sword*, who kill'd his Father.
 ——Yet, you are *just*, ye Gods!—Amazing Darkness
 Dwells o'er th' Eternal Will, and hides all *Cause*.
 I must not dare to tax Almighty Power,
 For what I suffer from it. Let it but *pay* me

With

With That curs'd Tyrant's Punishment attain'd:
 Let me but see myself depriv'd of *Him* —
 See him expell'd, from Light, from Earth, from Name,
 Deep, as the chearless Voids below can plunge him!
 And I will * kneel, a Wretch, and thank your Justice.

* kneeling

S C E N E IV.

Meropé, Ismené, Narbas.

N A R B A S.

Oh! Queen! best shewn by Woes! What *Wrongs*
 are yours!

M E R O P E' rising.

Yes, *Narbas*, — I have sacrific'd my Son —
 Have given him up, to Death — have, madly, own'd him.
 Yet, pity me, good *Narbas*! — Do not tell
 Th' insulting *World*, this Weakness. — Nature *knows* it:
 Knows, how Distress misleads: But Insult does not.
 — What Mother, who beheld her Son, as I did,
 Doom'd and endanger'd, cou'd have, then, kept Silence?

N A R B A S.

Gen'rous your Purpose! gloriously, you err'd:
 And fell, but from a Height, 'twas Fame, to reach.
 Dry up your Tears, and summon All your Soul:
 Time presses, — and a Moment, lost, is Fate.

(Shouts heard.)

I S M E N E (looking out)

Uproar, and Cries without, in rising Wildness,
 Heard from the City, reach the Palace Walls:
 Sure Sign of new Confusion!

N A R B A S.

From a Window,

Whence I look'd out, and mark'd the Streets below,
 I saw the Tyrant meet th' expecting Priests;
 Attending, not in *Hymeneal* Robes,
 But Vestments, such as *Sacrifice* demands;
 And Pomp of bloody Rites, at dreadful *Altars*.
 To *These*, his Hand consign'd the Victim, led:

And

And deaf'ning Shouts receiv'd him.—From the Train
Of Priestly Horrors, *this Way* mov'd their Chiefs;
Follow'd by loud, licentious, Bursts of Joy.
Amid th' enormous Swell of whose coarse Roar,
All, I distinctly heard was *Poliphontes*.

M E R O P E.

Yes, let 'em come—these Furies! rob'd in LYES!
White, as the Innocence they hate, *without* :
Within, more black than Night! more fell, than Death!
I will receive them, with their Tyrant's Rage:
Meet, and o'erwhelm 'em—with a Mother's Anguish.
—Where are my Guards? Arm'd, for my Vengeance,
call 'em.

(Soldiers enter, on one Side :

(On the other, ~~these~~ Priests.

S C E N E V.

Meropé, Narbas, Ismené, Priests.

M E R O P E.

What! are ye here already?—Out of my Sight,
Ye sanctify'd Deceits! You! whose bold Arts
Rule Rulers! and would fright even Kings, to *Awe*!
Be gone, fly, vanish—Or the *Death*, you bring
For Virtue, overtakes your punish'd *Guilt*.
Ye Mouths of Mercy! and ye Hands of Blood!

C H I E F P R I E S T.

Sorrows, and Wrongs, claim Privilege to rail:
And Heaven's affronted *Vot'ries* must forgive.

M E R O P E.

Cool, in your Cruelty!——Religion's Veil
Ill cloaks Rebellion's Licence. *Death* was your Errand.
Why talk you of *Forgiveness*?——'tis not yours.

C H I E F P R I E S T.

Not in *Death's* Cause we come; but Heaven's—and
Love's.

If *Vows* were plighted, 'twixt the King and *You*,
No Power on Earth dissolves 'em.

M E R O P E.

False, as Hell!

He knows, I heard his hated Vows with Horror.

—Slight

Slight Insolence!—To *this* ill-founded Charge,
Silence, and Scorn, shall answer. *[turning away.]*

CHIEF PRIEST.

Gracious Sovereign!
Suspend your Anger: 'tis unjustly rais'd.
—Enlighten, and *command* us.—Found too *easy*
In one *wrong'd* Faith, we twice, perhaps, have *err'd*:
Alike deceiv'd, in *Both*.—Unbend that Brow:
And deign to teach our Doubt, what *Name* to give
This Stranger? this young Captive to the King?

MEROPE.

Give him the Name you dare to misapply.
Call him your *King*—my Son—my lost *Eumenes*.

CHIEF PRIEST.

Hear *That*, prophetic Soul! high Heaven!—I tremble,
In Dread, this great Discovery comes too late.
The shouting People crowd the waiting Altar:
And, erring in their Zeal, *mis-bail* the Day.
—What *can* be, shall be try'd, to cross his Doom.
They shall be taught, in bold, adventurous Whispers,
To save their Sovereign's Right—but, hence, rash
Queen?

Learn due Repentance: and no more, let loose
The Wrongs of Rage, against the *Tongues* of Gods.
[Exeunt Priests.]

MEROPE.

Corrected Passion, reverent Hope, touch'd Shame,
And All a Mother's *Fears*, divide my Heart.
—This solemn Sharpness of deserv'd Reproach,
Mildly majestic, and severely soft,
Struck my too conscious Guilt, with infelt Awe!
I have been warm too soon: and just, too late.

What, tho' Religion's *Guardians* taint her Tide!
Pure is the *Fountain*, tho' the Stream flows *wide*
Too oft, her *erring Guides* her Cause, betray:
Yet, Rage grows *impious*, when it *bars* her *Way*.

End of the Fourth Act.

E

A C T

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Prison.

EUMENES. NARBAS. EURICLES.

EUMENES.

NOW, recollect your Danger: fly, lov'd Father!
Think on the Tyrant's Power, and shun his Rage.

NARBAS.

All Sense of my own Danger lost, in yours,
I threw myself, regardless, at his Feet.
Full of the fatal Subject, I began,
Uncautious in my Transport. Starting Conscience
Fled from the Face of Truth. He shun'd to hear,
Broke short, reply'd 'twas well: gave me Permission;
Nay, full of seeming Zeal, *injoin'd* my coming—
Bad me go pay my *last* short Debt, of Counsel:
And try to bend your Heart, to meet his Will.

EURICLES.

He added, that his *Queen*—he call'd her *His*!
I blush to name her such: but so, he charg'd me.
Since *she*, he said, in Pity but for you,
Yields a reluctant Hand, to close with *his*,
'Tis Time, *her* Son, whose Life she holds so dear,
Aids his own Int'rest, and confirms *her* Safety.
—The Rest, he paus'd and thought: but held it in,
Disdainful, frown'd a Nod—and bad us *leave* him.

EUMENES.

Slowly awaking, from my Dream of Wonders,
I seem re-born, to some new World, unknown;
Where every thing, I meet with, shocks my Soul.
New Blood inspires me! a new Nature prompts me!
And a new, *gloomy Daylight* dims my Views.
—You talk of *dying*, whilst I, yet, half doubt,
Whether, existing now, I really *live*!
If I am, truly, the lost Wretch I *seem*,
If here, confess'd, I *claim* this Birth sublime,
If in *Mycené* now inclos'd, I find

Queen

Queen *Meropé*, my Mother—King *Cresphontes*
 My Father, murder'd—his fear'd Murd'rers crown'd,
 With his stol'n Diadem: and, in it, daring
 Offer his widow'd Queen a *Hand*, stain'd, frightful,
 In her first *Husband's Blood*—All This, to me!
 Seems, while I drink in Heaven's fair Light, and view
 Yon Mansion of the *Gods*, who govern Man—
 Incredible! astonishing!—and horrid!

EURICLES.

'Tis horrible, indeed! too dark for Thought!
 —But, Reason's Line wants *Depth* to sound Heaven's Will.

NARBAS.

Deign, my *devoted* Prince! my King!—my Son!
 Suffer me, still, to use that long-lov'd Name—
 Deign but—to *live*.—Time, Chance, and Fortune's
 Changes,

May vindicate your Glory.—Since the Tyrant
 Tempts, to *betray*—reward him, with his *own*.
 Deceive Deceivers, and Deceit grows *Virtue*.

EUMENES.

This, in thy Forests, *Elis*! had I heard,
 Even there, I shou'd have blush'd to hear, from *Narbás*!
 But, as I am.—No more.—I wou'd not wrong
 Virtue, so *try'd*, by the least Shade of Doubt.
 Undue Suspicion is more abject Baseness,
 Even than the Guilt suspected.—Pardon the *seeming*.
 Kind was your *Motive*!—pitying my *Distress*,
 You, but, forgot my *Duty*.

NARBAS.

Happy Forests!

Wou'd, Ye were Ours, once more! there, Peace dwelt
 with us:

There, Safety slept, upon unguarded Hills,
 And every Tree's soft Shadow *cover'd* Anguish.

EUMENES.

Erring, from Shade to Shade, there, lost to Glory,
 Deaf, to my Parent's Wrongs, my Country's Call,
 The Great Man's Virtues, or the Good Man's Duties,
 I lay, and languish'd out a deedless Youth:
 Easy too early; yet, in Rest, unsatisfied!

Something, like Instinct, wak'd Alarm, within me.
 Something, I felt at heart—I knew not what—
 Withdrew me from this Calm!—I wanted Nothing:
 Yet, Nothing, I possess'd, cou'd fill my Mind!
 What was it I pursued, which you not gave me?
 I weigh'd your Worth, and cou'd not wish it more:
 Even to your Wants, I lov'd—what'ere was yours;
 And rev'renc'd your Afflictions. Witness, Heaven!
 I never wou'd have wish'd a nobler Father.

—The Heaven I have attested, found it fit
 To give me One, unask'd: and made me wretched.
 I find That Father, lost to Life, and Empire—
 I find a Mother, wrong'd—and cannot right her—
 I find a People mine—yet, find myself
 The Slave of their Oppressor.—Oh! ye Gods!
 Is This, to be a King!—why wou'd you save me?
 Why, with mistaken Goodness, wou'd your Love
 Persuade me, to sustain, a Life, so curs'd?
 Why did your ill-tim'd Aid avert the Stroke,
 That wou'd have left this dreadful Scene un-drawn,
 And plung'd me into one long Sleep, of Peace?

EURICLES.

Oh! 'tis too near, that Sleep!—the Tyrant comes!

SCENE II.

POLIPHONTES. *To the Fore-going.*

POLIPHONTES.

Retire: and wait, without.

[*Exeunt Euricles and Narbas.*

—And Thou, rash Youth!

Whose unexperienc'd Years, and gen'rous Plainness,
 Fill me with all the Pity, due to Weakness!
 For the last Time I come, to bring thee Power
 Thyself, to chuse, and make, thy Form of Fortune.
 Thy present, and thy future,—thy claim'd Birth,
 Fate, Figure, Being,—all,—depend on me,
 —What has gay Youth like thine to do with State?
 Eyeless and dark, amid the gloomy Wilds:
 Of Court Intrigue, thou want'st the Torch, of Time,
 To

A TRAGEDY. 61

To light thee, through the mazy *Curves*, of Power;
Or, burn *Obstruction's* Fabricks down, before thee,
Leave to my Toil, to smoothe thy future Paths;
And root out Faction's Thorns, which trouble Empire.
—When I am *dead*—as Age admits *short* Stay,
Thou, and my *Meropé* will reign, at Ease,
And thank my painful Cares: and love my Memory.
—Why art thou dumb?—Pause on—I read thee,
rightly.
Thou hast, I know, a kind of stubborn Pride,
Call'd *Courage*—and mistak'st it, for a *Virtue*.
—'Tis *Virtue*; when *Presumption* drives it not:
But suffers *Thought* to guide it.

EUMENES.

Guiding Thought
Has held me patient, long.—Now, answer me.
Am I *Mycené's Monarch*?

POLIPHONTES.

For thy Birth,
Be it, as Truth, or Trick, or Chance, conclude it,
If, from some low, some nameless Stock, derived,
Be humble, and advis'd—and rise to Greatness.
If happier Offspring cast thee for a *King*,
Make thyself *worthy*, of the Crown I mean thee.
—'Tis but, to wait me to the Marriage Altar,
Where Love, and *Meropé*, and Peace, attend.
There, to the Gods and me, (*Mycené's Guardians*)
Swear Homage, and devote thy faithful Sword.
That done, Sports, Joys, and Safety, crown thy
Youth:
And, in thy riper Years, expect the Diadem.
—Determine.

EUMENES.

—'Tis determin'd.

POLIPHONTES.

Tell me *how*?

EUMENES.

Why am I left *unfree* to *chuse*—yet, press'd
To tell thee my Decision?—The *compell'd*
To *yield*, disgrace Consent: and make Faith doubtful.

Kings shou'd disdain to dread their *powerful* Foes :
 Less, shou'd they deign, to swell the Pride of *weak* ones.
 —I am a *Captive*. He, who holds not Freedom,
 Has not his Will his *own* :——and chuses *nothing*.

POLIPHONTES.

Fierce, amid Misery ! thou, at once, art brave,
 And insolent, and wretched !——but, beware,
 Nor trust, too far, my Pity of thy Poorness.
 I give thee, yet, some Moments, to resolve.
 I go, before thee : but, my Guards attend,
 To bring thee to the Altar. Come, determin'd
 To *swear*——and hope my Crown, and live, my Son :
 Or *die*, a Slave un-own'd, and lose thy *Name*. [*Is going*.

EUMENES, *calling after him*.

Thou *goest* then ?

POLIPHONTES. [*Stopping*.]

To *expect* thee.

EUMENES.

I will *come*.

And *with* me, (tremble to be told it,) comes
 The *God*, that rais'd my Race to root out *Tyrants*,
 For *Thee*, proud Troubler of a pilfer'd *Hour* !
 Whom *Age* and *Guilt* combine to shake from Empire !
 Soon shall the Throne thou *stol'st* no more be Thine :
 And every snaky Fury *bids* to *find* thee.
 Horror and Penitence shall *pale* those *Eyes*,
 Which, insolently ardent, *frown* on *Virtue*.
 Menace and Insult, *then*, shall quit thy *Voice*,
 And groaning *Anguish* grind it. —— What the Gods]
 Restrain my Hand from reaching, *happier* Sons
 Of my *immortal* Sire shall rise, to execute :
 And hurl thee from a *Power*, that *burts* *Mankind*.

POLIPHONTES.

Here, *Narbas* ! *Euricles* !——You may return.
 I leave him to your Lessons. Too too deeply,
 He feels their past Impression. Teach him better :
 Or your exacted *Heads* shall answer to me,
 For every well-known Help I owe your Hatred.
 —*Narbas* ! Thy Age, I think, might best be trusted.
 Experience lays his Dangers open to thee.

Thou,

A TRAGEDY.

63

Thou, as thou lov'st, advise him.—Whether born
The Son of *Meropé*, or *Thine*, no matter.
I must adopt him mine,—or *Death* demands him.

EUMENES.

Away.—Even to the Soul, *Eumenes* dies,

[*Exit Poliphontes.*

Ere *Thine*, but for a Moment.—Friends! did you bear
him?

S C E N E III.

EUMENES, NARBAS, EURICLES.

EUMENES.

Where did this ill-instructed Tyrant learn
To threaten, for Persuasion!—I suspect,
He does not seem to doubt, but doubts indeed,
I share no Blood of *Hercules*.—He's gone:
And call'd me, to his Altar.—Let us follow.

NARBAS.

Pause.—Whither wou'd such fatal Rashness lead you?

EURICLES.

The Queen has Friends: how'er too weak, too few:
Who dare defend her Cause. Give us but Time.

EUMENES.

In a serener, safer, Hour, than *This*,
How gladly had my Heart obey'd your Counsel!
Trusted your Wisdom! heard with docile Ear!
And will'd but by your Guidance!—As it is,
I dare not hazard a Friend's Fall, to save me.
No.—In an Hour so black, so dire, as *This*,
I task but my own Heart, and Heaven, to aid me.
If I must fall, I will.—I go—to try
What God forsakes the Friendless.

[*Going out, meets Meropé.*

S C E N E IV.

MEROPE.

Stay, my Son.—

Th' Usurper sends me to thee.—Rest, unheard,
His Errand: but my own requires thy Ear.

It has, perhaps, been told thee, that the Woman

Conquers the *Queen* : and, that pervertive Dread
Of the Son's Fate forgets the Mother's *Duty*.

—Let no light *Credit* of a Guilt so shameful
Insult the Daughter, Mother, Wife,—ah, me!
And *Widow*—of a King.—Yet, I *must* go :
Must, at the Altar, lend my trembling *Hand* ;
And *seem*—oh, Heaven!—

E U M E N E S.

Seem, Madam?—so, to seem,
Were so to *be*. Can solemn Vows, at Altars,
Leave Room for Art's Evasions? See *me*, sooner,
Tinge-ing the spotted Stone with blushing Blood ;
And my torn *Breast* the offer'd Sacrifice.

M E R O P E.

So look'd, so spoke—so, sometimes, frown'd, *Cresphontes*,
Full of thy godlike Father, copy too,
The *Confidence*, he lent me. *He* had scorn'd
To doubt me, for a Moment, *less than Meropé*.

E U M E N E S.

If I was guilty,—think—

M E R O P E.

—Be dumb.—Time presses ;—
Hear my resolving Will : and curb thy own.
Th' Usurper of thy Throne no sooner joins
My Hand's suppos'd Consent, than, at the *Altar*,
He *swears*—in all the Pomp of *priestly Witness*,
To free thee from thy Chains—and, from That Hour,
Confirm *Succession*, thine.—So, suffers *Thee*,
(By Heav'n's whole imprecated Host, he *swears* it)
To *live*, till he's no more ; then, reign, a King.

E U M E N E S.

Think, at what *Price* comes Empire, bought so *dear* !
Rather than see you wed him—

M E R O P E.

Rash, again?—

Bound, by an Oath, so witness'd, by the *Gods*,
And All *Mycene's Priests*—and All her *Peers*—
He dares not *break* it : and Thou liv'st, to *reign*.
—For me, who have, thenceforth, no Call for Life,
I seek thy *Father*, in the Grooms, below.

Trium-

Triumphant, in the Point of last Distress,
 Even when the Good shall pity, Bad shall scorn me,
 When Honour dreams me *fall'n*, below Redress;
 Then, shall this forfeit Hand, disdaining Baseness,
 Brighter than Glory shine, in prais'd Atonement:
 And mock the Tyrant's Hope, and shun his Insult.

EUMENES.

Death, in a thousand Shapes, compar'd with This,
 Smiles, with an Infant's Innocence.—No more.
 —It shall *not be*.—See! my repugnant Soul
 Shrinks from th' abhorr'd Concession. The felt *God*,
 The GOD, glows, in me: swells, against Controul:
 And every springy Nerve is active *Fire*!
 Come on, Friends! Father! Mother!—trust my
 Firmness.

Trust it in Death's dire Scorn. Come, hasten with
 me——

See, if I bear a Heart, that brooks this Wrong:
 That poorly pants, for a base Hour of *Life*——
 And lets a *Woman's* Blood outdare a *King's*. [Going.

MEROPE.

Oh! stay: return.—Call: stop him.

EURICLES.

Sir!

NARBAS.

Prince!

MEROPE.

Son!

EUMENES. *Returning.*

Look out: hark yonder: from my Father's *Tomb*.
 Hear! his *Ghost* calls!—Wrong'd Spirit! I obey.

MEROPE.

Oh! stay, one Moment, *stay*.—Methinks the *God*
 He talk'd of, swells *indeed*, his widening Soul!
 Lifts him, *above* Himself——above *Mankind*.
 I will, respectful, *bail* the Power Divine:
 And hope, beyond Appearance.—Yet, oh! hear me—
 Oh! speak to me, *Eumenes*!—ere thou goest,
 Breathe on my distant Heart some Beam—some Share—
 Of this inspir'd Divinity, that shakes thee.

EUME-

EUMENES.

Come—let me lead you to the Altar's Foot.
There hear, there, see—*there*, dwells th' Eternal's Eye!

MEROPE.

Ah! what is thy Design!

EUMENES.

To die,—to live.

Friends!—in this warm Embrace, *divide* my Soul.
 Farewel!—farewel, *forever*.

[To Narbas, *who presses him tenderly*.

—Weep not, my Father!

No Blush, for Deeds unworthy your Instructions,
 Shall stain Remembrance of the Care, I cost you.
 —Stay, *you*—till hither this good Lord, returning,
 May guide your Purpose: or require your Counsel.

[Exit Eumenes.

MEROPE to ISMENE, *who enters*.

Ismené! stay: comfort thy mournful Father.

[Exeunt Meropé and Euricles.

S C E N E V.

NARBAS, ISMENE.

NARBAS.

Away—I wou'd not see *thee* share my Sorrow.

ISMENE.

Oh! 'twere too *poor* a Wish. Heaven knows, I seek
 No *Share*,—I long for *Power*, to bear it, *All*.

NARBAS.

Thou art too good, for Courts—where *Ruin* preys
 On Innocence; and nought but *Guile* is safe.
 —What are thy Thoughts, of this lost *Prince's* Virtues?

ISMENE.

I am unskill'd in Man: and, most, in Kings.
 But, sure! if ever Beauty dwelt in Form,
 Courage in Gentleness, or Truth in Grandeur,
 All those adorn'd Distinctions meet, in *Him*.

NARBAS.

Yet, see! how Heaven, that *gave* him all these Claims,
 Forgets 'em, and resigns him.—Let That teach thee,
 When

A TRAGEDY.

67

When, soon, as soon they will, thy Splendors fall,
Thou lovest nothing, but a Right to *Woes* :
Which *mean* Maids never meet with.

ISMENE.

Shou'd the Queen,

Best, of her Sex! and Great, above all Rank!
Leave this loud Stage of Pain,—and rest in *Death*,
Oh! teach my willing Feet to find some Gloom,
Dark, as my Prospects, deep inclos'd, for Safety;
And silent, as the Brow of midnight Sleep!

NARBAS.

And cou'dst thou, so, have *Courage*, to be safe?—
Yes, we *will* go, my *sweet Ismene*, go,
Where Sorrow's sharpest Eye shall fail to find us.
Where we may mix with Men, who ne'er deceiv'd,
And Women, born to *be*, the Charms they look.
—There *is* a Place, which my *Eumenes* lov'd,
Till Youth's fond Hope of Glory dash'd his Peace;
Where Nature, plainly noble, knows no *Pomp*;
And Virtue moves no *Envy*:—quiet *Plenty*,
Unartful *Pleasure*, unaffected *Joy*,
And ever blushing, ever guiltless *Modesty*,
Cloathe Love, and Taste, and Converse, neatly fine:
Unloaded with their *Tinsels*.—Hark! That Cry
Bodes Horror—'tis the Signal of some Fate.
—Listen, again—

ISMENE.

Again I hear: and tremble.

Who knows, but, now, the Queen's too direful Deed
Has ended all her Mis'ries!—Cruel *Hymen*!
Such if thy Unions, let the World *disjoin*!
And Marriage be the hated Mark of Shame!

NARBAS.

No more these Eyes shall find thee, fated King!
Cresphontes, and his Race, are, All, no more.

ISMENE.

Hark! It comes on, like Thunder in the Wind,
Still strength'ning in its Motion.

NARBAS.

I distinguish

The Voice of battling Parties—echoing Trumpets—
And

And Groans of dying Men, confus'dly mingled.

ISMENE, *at a Window.*

Hence, from the Temple, to the Palace Gate,
The scattr'd Crowd runs, wide, a thousand Ways:
All busied, without View—All, driven, by Terror!

S C E N E VI.

NARBAS. ISMENE. EURICLES, *bloody.*

NARBAS.

Breathless and bleeding see! who comes!—O, *Euricles!*
Is it of Enemies?—or, flows it, fatal?

ISMENE.

Now wou'd the Deaf be bless'd—the Blind be happy.

EURICLES.

Scarce had I Strength, wedg'd in by crossing Crowds,
To stem yon breathing Torrent.—Give me Rest.

NARBAS.

Eumenes?———does he *live*?

EURICLES.

He———

ISMENE.

Dreadful Pause!

EURICLES.

He is——the *Son confess'd*——of *Grecian Gods!*

NARBAS.

What has he suffer'd?

EURICLES.

Nothing—but, has *done*——

Beyond Example's Boast.—Oh! such a Deed!
So terrible! so just!——so fill'd with Wonders!
That half *Alcides'* Labours, scarce were more.

NARBAS.

And shall he be a King?

EURICLES.

He *is*.

NARBAS.

And Meropé?

Great Mirror of Affliction!—lives *She*, too?

How was it?—say.—My Joys will grow too strong?

EURI-

EURICLES.

The Altar, strew'd with Flow'rs, was ready dress'd,
 The smoking Incense rose, in fragrant Cur's,
 And *Hymen's* lambent Torches flam'd, serene,
 Silence, and Expectation's dreadful *Stillness*,
 Doubled the solemn Horror of the Scene!
 —There, *Poliphontes* stood: and, at his Side,
 Dumb as a destin'd Victim, stood the *Queen*.
 Our Prince's summon'd Hand had touch'd the Altar;
 His Eye sought Heaven—as if prepar'd to *swear*.
 The Tyrant smil'd:—when strait, the Priest look'd *pale*;
 The Lights extinguish'd—and the Temple's Roof,
 Shook by descending Thunder, seem'd to *bow*!
 The *God!* the *God!* the reverend Starter cry'd,
Forbids these baneful Nuptials.—Yes: I HEAR him,
 The dreadful Prince reply'd: and, at that Word,
 Leapt, from the Altar, to the Tyrant's Breast—
 And plung'd the sacred *Axe* of Sacrifice,
 Snatch'd, like a Lightning's Flash! and reach'd his *Life*.
 —He *fell*—and o'er him while with pendant Eye
 Th' indignant Hero hung, with Arm new rais'd,
 Base, from behind, pale *Erox* pierc'd his Side.
 —Red, in his mingled Blood, and rising Anger,
 He heard the *Crowd's protective Cry*—turn'd short,
 And buried in his Brow the rapid Steel.
 Then, to the Altar's Height sublimely sprung,
 Stood, Monarch, all-confess'd; and *wav'd* the Throng.

NARBAS.

All, All, prodigious! and the Work of Heaven.

ISMENE.

How was the trembling Queen, mean while, employ'd?

EURICLES.

Silence, ye People, hear your King, she cry'd
 Son of my Sorrows: hear *Mycenē's Gods*.
 —More, she had said—but from the Temple's Porch,
 The Tyrant's Guards rush'd in; and All grew Tempest:
 —Th' inspiring Priests proclaim'd their Sovereign's
 Cause;
 The People heard 'em: and a *War of Wills*,
 And Swords cross-clashing, fill'd the *Fane* with Death:
 Sudden, the Shrines, o'erthrown, were stain'd with Blood;
 Crush'd

'Crush'd Infants, in their smother'd Mother's Arms,
Gasp'd, and expir'd. Friends, Foes, Priests, Stran-
gers, All,

Heap'd on each other lay, one mingled Carnage!
Now flying, now returning, flows and ebbs,
From Side to Side, the press'd and shouldr'ing Stream.
—The Swell of Slaughter push'd me thro' the Gate,
And veil'd the *Queen*, and her *Eumenes*, from me.
But, to the last, long as my Sight cou'd hold her,
I saw her, in the bloody Tide, opposing,
Beseeching, threat'ning; tiring every Limb,
And losing every Prayer, to save *Eumenes*.
—But, see! Heaven's Instrument, the kind High Priest,
Is here—and calls for *Narbas*.

[Enter High Priest.]

HIGH PRIEST.

Good old Man!

To you, and to your Daughter's pitied Fears,
Our *Queen*, victorious, her doom'd Son, redeem'd
And Heaven, that loves the Just, send Peace and Joy.
—The People, by my timely Zeal appriz'd,
Won from the Tyrant's Cause, sustain the King.
The King, by more than mortal Force, inspir'd,
Has, by one, great, determin'd, dreadful Blow,
To his high, injur'd, Race, his Country's Fame,
And murder'd Father's Ghost, a bloody Victim,
Devoted! offer'd up the Tyrant's Soul.
—Death, and Revenge, and due Defence of Right,
Delug'd the Temple: and the Scene grew horrid.
When, to the Leaders of his furious Guards,
Who, through the direful Conflict, won their way,
Pale *Polipbontes*, struggling from his Pangs,
And stagg'ring painful, with expiring Eye,
Rais'd his now powerless Hand; bad Slaughter cease:
Call'd the Gods *just*—and own'd th' inflicted *Vengeance*.
Then, at their Prince's Feet, th' astonish'd Band
Fell prostrate. Silence strait took place of Uproar:
Low knelt the Crowd, in Peace—Rebellion died—
And Awe, and Homage, felt th' inspiring *God*.
But look, where Heaven's compleated Work appears.

SCENE

A TRAGEDY.

51

SCENE the Last.

To the Foregoing—MEROPE, led by EUMENES, bloody.—Priests. Guards. People. Shouts without : and Trumpets.

NARBAS, EURICLES, CHIEF PRIEST, and ISMENE.

—All, speak, kneeling.

Hail! and be ever blest'd—O, King! O, Queen!

MEROPE.

Rise—and lament no more, ye happy Friends
Of Virtue, and of Heaven!—See! what the Gods
Have done—to shame Suspicion, into Faith!

Oh! never let the Innocent despair :

The Hand, that made, can save : and best knows when.

—But you, Heav'n's Herald! Envoy, of its Will!

And Image, of its Mercy! what, to you,

Shall my recov'ring Sense of Godhead say?

That dar'd, in Sorrow's Agony, forget

The Distance, of High Heaven, from human Weakness!

Oh! call not Anguish Insult. Smile, on Wrongs :

And bless the pitied Pang, amidst its Rashness.

[To Eumenes.

—Son of Alcides!—for, what Heart, but His,

Nourish'd in Misery! by Wants obstructed!

Ere sprung, like thine, at Youth's first Shoot, to Glory?

Ere, for its first Essay, o'erwhelm'd Oppression;

Trod on a Tyrant, and redeem'd a People?

EUMENES.

'Tis but the low, the last, the lightest Duty

Of a King's Hand, to dare. 'Tis His, to save;

To think, to hear, to labour, to discern,

To form, to remedy,—to be—but one :

Yet, act, and love, and fear, and feel,—for All.

—Oh, Madam! I am yours, midst all these Claims.

Be Those my Glory's, This my Duty's Care,

To add my Royal Father's Love, to mine :

And, with a doubled Rev'rence, seek your Comfort.

—Help me, good Euricles! in That sweet View :

Thou art no Stranger to its gen'rous Call—

And

M E R O P E

And I will *court* Thy Counsels—and *reward* 'em.
 —*Narbas*! what Power can Language lend my Love,
 To paint the Joy, *Thy* Sense of Pleasure gives me?
 Guide of my Infancy! my Life's long *Saver*!
 Light of my opening Mind! my Heart's first *Former*!
 Thou Source, and Soul, and Author, of my Virtues:
 And every future Fame, the Gods may lend me!
 —What can deficient Gratitude inspire,
 To shew my *Will to thank* Desert, like *Thine*?

[*Turns toward Ismene.*]

Unless This softer Copy of thy Goodness,
 Loveliest *Ismenè*, smiles on my sweet Hope:
 And stoops to be a *Queen*—to bless her *Father*.
 —I mark a meaning Blush, that looks Consent:
 And *bear* thee, tho' thou speak'st not.—Till anon,
 Suspend we Thoughts, thus tender.—Let us, now,
 Summon *Mycenè's Chiefs*, and calm her People.

[*To Merope.*]

Come, Madam! He who *reigns*, but climbs to
 Care;
Safe, tho' his Throne, he finds no *Softness*, there.
 Dangers, and Doubts, and Toils, each Moment
 seize:
 Hang on his Business—or perplex his Ease.
 Bright, but by Pomp of *Woe*, Kings *shine* in vain:
 Envy'd, for *Anguish*; and adorn'd, for Pain!

The E N D.

